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Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad: Perceived Importance of Components

by

Michelle E. Szabo

©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Adult and Higher Education

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1996

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad: Perceived Importance of Components submitted by Michelle E. Szabo in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education.

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Jan. 23, 1996

This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents,
Ruth S. Hansen and William E. Hansen.

ABSTRACT

Study abroad is a powerful tool for serving student as well as institutional interests. Yet without adequate student orientation prior to departure, the effectiveness of study abroad programming can be greatly affected. This study explored the importance of components of predeparture preparation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners, the sponsoring institution, students preparing to study abroad, and past participants of study abroad. A focus group, two interviews, and a questionnaire were used. Findings show that students want specific, personalized information; they want to meet with other exchange students; they perceive immediately applicable components to be the most important; and they do not value culture-general and adjustment issues as highly as do practitioners and academics. Findings also demonstrate the importance of area- and culture-specific learning, re-entry programming, an experiential approach, and global education for departing sojourners. Interests of the University of Alberta are not entirely shared by participants and must be more clearly articulated. The Education Abroad Program should consider restructuring its predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants to ensure quality and to include alternate delivery methods.

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Chapter 1 Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad

The effect of globalization on our society as a whole and on the University in particular is undeniable. Our horizons must change.
--Senate Task Force Report on the International Dimensions of the University, University of Alberta

Study Abroad: A Growing Concern

For centuries, students have undertaken the challenge of studying outside of their nation's borders. As early as the fourth century B.C. there were groups of foreign students in the schools of philosophy and rhetoric in Greece; in the fourth century A.D., special provisions were made for dealing with the large numbers of foreign students flocking to Rome; in the seventh century, there were more than eight thousand students in China described as coming from the "barbarian peoples" (Breitenbach, 1970). Ganguli (1975) reports that exchanges between India and China started as far back as the third century B.C. When the European universities were founded around the twelfth century A.D., they were truly "universal," with foreign students as the rule rather than the exception (Klineberg, 1981).

Given the current trend in the public and private sectors toward increasing globalism, the recent focus of the Canadian government on international education, the "third pillar" of Canadian foreign policy, comes as no surprise. The exchange of students and scholars across national and regional boundaries is a time-tested facilitator of international trade, the exchange of advances in technology and expertise, and mutual understanding and goodwill. International savvy is fast becoming the hallmark of the well-qualified graduate of the future.

In this fertile conceptual climate for globalization, the field of education abroad is receiving unprecedented attention. NAFSA: Association of

International Educators (formerly the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, now known by its acronym) has identified education abroad as one of its five main professional interest divisions, a division which currently includes 2000 of the organization's 7500 members. Since 1987, the European Union has invested significant resources in its European Action Strategy for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) and similar programs. Thanks to ERASMUS, more than 248,000 students and 23,000 faculty members participated in exchanges in the period 1987-1994 (de Wit, 1995). In November 1995, Canada signed an agreement with the European Union, as did the United States, to further academic and scientific collaboration, including the exchange students between member states. In December 1995, the first edition of a refereed journal focusing exclusively on study abroad, Frontiers, was published. Despite funding challenges facing international education, particularly in the U.S. federal government, education abroad is definitely an emerging field in higher education today.

In Canada, the phenomenon of study abroad is relatively new. Following World War II, Canadians who studied overseas tended to undertake foreign degrees rather than incorporate their foreign study into a Canadian degree program. The first designated education abroad offices at Canadian universities were not established until the mid 1980s, at the University of Alberta and the University of British Columbia. Many universities and colleges in Canada still do not have designated staff or programming related to education abroad. The intentional inclusion of foreign study as part of a postsecondary degree has become common practice in Canada only in the past two decades.

Internationalization of Higher Education

The growing interest in study abroad exists within a wider context: the internationalization of higher education. Goodwin and Nacht (1991) posit three waves of internationalization to have hit the U.S. higher education system: the pressure to act as "leader of the free world" following World War II, the flood of foreign students which "lapped" American shores in the 1970s and 1980s, and the swelling tide of globalism both in- and outside academe during the 1990s. As a result, increasing numbers of U.S. institutions of higher education are including international dimensions in their policy and mission statements. In a recent report from the American Council on Education, U.S. college presidents outlined their own call to action for the internationalization of higher education (American Council on Education, 1995).

In Canada, "three national organizations and one provincial one have identified internationalization as an issue of critical importance" (Knight, 1994, p. 1). According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), "Canada's universities must become bastions of internationalism if Canada is to improve or even maintain its position in a variety of sectors through the 1990s... Internationalization will be the measure of quality of universities in the 1990s" (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 1991). In 1989, the presidents of Canadian universities, through the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), stated that "internationalization of the undergraduate curriculum is essential for the effective survival of Canada. This is a high priority for Canadian universities and it must be a high priority for the Government of Canada and the provinces" (as quoted in Knight, 1994, p.2). In 1992 AUCC found that 63% of its members referred to an international

role in their mission statements (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1994).

Study abroad has a significant role to play in the internationalization of higher education. As an educational and social tool, study abroad has historically served as a finishing school for Europe's youth (in the days of the "grand tour"), as a mechanism for broadening the intellectual capacity of the élite, as an aid in foreign language acquisition, as a tool for self-discovery, and to fulfill a distinct institutional mission and improve international relations (Goodwin and Nacht, 1988). Yet study abroad may also serve as an institutional and administrative lever by attracting more students, attracting the best students, acceding to the entrepreneurial drives of faculty, selling "the kids" what they want, giving students "a break," and facilitating inter-institutional linkages (Goodwin and Nacht, 1988, pp. 21-28).

As education abroad has been introduced in Canadian postsecondary institutions, there has been a predisposition to start with and largely focus on reciprocal exchanges. Evidence suggests that the vast majority of Canadians who study abroad as part of a Canadian degree are on exchange programs; at the University of Alberta, exchanges account for 90% of study abroad participation. Education abroad in Canada has developed in a time of fiscal restraint and downsizing, in contrast to the postwar prosperity which characterized its development in the U.S. For this reason, academic exchanges have occupied a favored place within Canadian institutions. Exchanges tend to require minimal financial investment on the part of the institution and may facilitate recruitment of foreign graduate students, promote exchange of faculty and collaboration on areas of mutual interest, and enhance the university's reputation abroad.

> Another factor making exchanges the more common mode of study abroad versus junior year abroad models is the relatively low tuition and fees paid by Canadian students. Choosing a program in the UK/Australia or abroad elsewhere for Americans involves those students in a different fiscal reality than Canadian students. (personal correspondence from Barry Tonge, Coordinator, Education Abroad Program, University of Alberta, January 23, 1996)

Academic exchanges serve a further role in promoting multi-level linkages between postsecondary institutions. The development of institutional partnerships is a growing trend in postsecondary education. Constructive alliances in education formed the theme for the CBIE's 1995 annual conference, and a recent presentation at the conference of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) highlighted strategic partnerships between universities in the U.S. and Mexico (García and Medeiros, 1995). Notable is the expansion of single-level linkages, such as student exchanges, into multi-level agreements, which might involve joint research projects, exchange of staff and faculty, or even the issuance of joint degrees. These multi-level linkages often serve larger institutional interests, making them particularly attractive in times of economic restraint and emphasis on quality assessment. Student mobility is often a key component in such agreements. Student exchanges may follow the establishment of larger agreements, such as the Group of Ten (GOT) Canadian universities which support the Group of Ten Student Exchange program (GOTSEP), or they may pave the way for the development of wider collaboration.

From a student services perspective, the advent of direct enrollment exchanges at Canadian postsecondary institutions is consistent with the research-oriented model which influenced the development of many

universities and colleges in Canada. The trend in Canada, particularly at larger institutions, has been to see students as independent adults who come to university primarily for an academic rather than personal or spiritual experience. Exchanges are well suited to this model; this normally unchaperoned, "total immersion" (Goodwin and Nacht, 1988, p. 34) approach to foreign study requires students to take more or less full responsibility for their well being while abroad. It is not surprising that exchanges have been the favored approach to study abroad in Canada.

The Role of Study Abroad and Predeparture Orientation

Study abroad programs can significantly benefit the student participants as well as the universities and larger communities to which they travel and in which they study. As a result of their sojourn, students can gain maturity, increase their tolerance and awareness of diversity, develop a critical distance to their own culture, clarify their values, and gain specific knowledge and skills (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981).

> Study abroad seems to promote the ability to adjust to unfamiliar situations, to deal with different kinds of people, to be prepared to take on new duties and new working conditions, to get to know previously unknown subject matters, to manage in unaccustomed circumstances and to learn from comparisons--attributes which are clearly important both professionally and socially and whose significance extends far beyond the specific framework of internationally oriented jobs. (Opper, Teichler, and Carlson, 1990, p. 213)

In addition, study abroad programs can foster the development of an internationally informed citizenry and a cadre of graduates well prepared for careers in fields of worldwide activity (Council on International Educational

Exchange, 1988). Yet without adequate orientation prior to departure, the effectiveness of the study abroad experience can be greatly affected (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981). In the words of Robert Kohls (1984), author of the standard issue text on preparing to go overseas, "there may be many unknowns or uncertainties but it's possible to lay the groundwork for a productive time overseas" (p. 1).

Predeparture orientation, like many topics within study abroad, attracts a great deal of interest from practitioners in the field, but significantly less academic and research-based interest. Predeparture orientation is a core subject in NAFSA's standardized "Study Abroad 101" curriculum and several comprehensive guides have been published in the U.S. dealing with the subject. A recent request on the Internet yielded dozens of responses outlining current predeparture orientation practices (see Appendix A for listing of institutions which provided materials). Many responded that they, too, would welcome information on the subject.

However, materials prepared in the U.S. are not always suitable for Canadian audiences. The distinctiveness of Canadian culture is often lost when U.S. American materials are used in orientation, and Canadian participants complain that the materials do not speak to their experience. In an effort to redress the situation, seven Ontario institutions of higher education recently created a training video to be used as or in a predeparture orientation program (World Within Reach, 1995). More efforts are needed to tailor predeparture orientation materials to the needs of Canadian participants.

At the same time as study abroad practitioners in the U.S. and Canada are eagerly swapping expertise and scrambling to develop programs to prepare their students, there is a paucity of research dealing specifically with the subject of predeparture orientation for study abroad. Common practice in study abroad

preparations, the needs of participants, and the interests of sponsoring institutions are matters about which experts seem eager to comment but reticent to research.

Paradigms of Internationalization

Possible Approaches

If study abroad is to serve larger institutional interests, than it is crucial for study abroad professionals to understand the direction the institution is taking with regard to internationalization. Understanding the strength of an institution's commitment to internationalization does not indicate the nature of the desired change. If the institutional focus is not clearly defined, efforts to internationalize will be fragmented at best. A well coordinated effort is the result, among other things, of a well articulated paradigm for change. Several broad paradigms of internationalization have been delineated in the literature and will guide this discussion.

Warner (1993) outlines three generalized models which describe underlying assumptions and imperatives in the internationalization of a university. In the competitive model, international dimensions of the university are introduced in order to make the student, the institution, and the country more competitive in the global marketplace. In the liberal model, the primary goal of education is to increase understanding of and cooperation with people from other countries. The third model, social transformation, is driven by the determination to give students and scholars a deeper awareness of and resolve to act upon international and intercultural issues related to equity and justice.

Toh (1993) describes two primary paradigms of globalization, the liberal-technocratic and the social transformative. Adherents to the liberal-

technocratic paradigm are characterized by an ethnocentric, often covertly paternalistic perspective toward other countries and cultures and by an interest in economic and other forms of competition. In broad strokes, subscribers to the social transformative paradigm acknowledge the basic interdependence of all people and strive to reduce social injustice and inequity between richer and poorer nations and peoples.

The implication of these approaches to internationalization for study abroad is profound. A university which is primarily interested in developing the competitiveness of its students on a global scale would be ill-advised to focus its study abroad programming efforts on technical assistance projects in nations of the South. Similarly, an institution which prides itself on its social conscience and in promulgating this attitude amongst its students will do well to include some elements of North-South exchange and eschew, for example, internship programs with transnational corporations whose respect for the environment is questionable. If the study abroad program is to support and uphold an institution's goals with respect to internationalization, the models or paradigms underlying the institution's policies and procedures must be articulated.

The University of Alberta

At the University of Alberta, the particular paradigm of internationalization has not been articulated as such, but close examination of University documents yields some insight into the policy ethos. In its strategic plan, Degrees of Freedom (University of Alberta, 1993), the University recently proclaimed its commitment to developing an international perspective across the campus. The document recommends that the University generate a

proposal for the coordination and organization of an international perspective at the University of Alberta.

In 1994, the University Senate created an annual Task Force to explore the international dimensions of the campus. The Task Force concluded that "educational curricula must be internationalized; the campus must become global in its perspective" (Senate Task Force Report, 1994, p.4). In addition, the Task Force reported that "the effect of globalization on our society as a whole and on the University in particular is undeniable. Our horizons must change" (Senate Task Force Report, 1994, p. 3). While the report was accepted by the Senate, it remains a recommendation and as such is not binding.

Four pillars of internationalization outlined by the Senate Task Force on the International Dimensions of the University (1994) include an international perspective infused within the curriculum (see also University of Alberta, 1993), student and scholar mobility across national borders (see also Fraser, 1995; also mentioned in University of Alberta panel discussion "What is an International University?", January 30, 1996), a commitment to development education and cooperation, and an element of ambassadorship on and off campus. In addition, the mission statement of the University and numerous other University documents indicate that the standards by which the University judges its own performance and that of its students and scholars are both national and international.

Internationalization is unquestionably a key priority for the University of Alberta. Just this fall, in a memo to Dean's Council on October 4, 1995, the Vice-President (Academic) of the University wrote of the necessity of creating a new academic appointment which would gather the University's international affairs under a single, senior and academic figure (International Affairs, 1995). In his December 18, 1995 newsletter to the faculty and staff of the University,

newly inaugurated President Rod Fraser identified internationalization as one of the four external initiatives of the institution. Internationalizing the university, among other tasks, currently occupies a full 50% of his time.

The desired outcomes of internationalization for the University of Alberta can be categorized as they relate to students, the institution, larger regional and national interests, and society as a whole (see Figure 1). Desired outcomes of internationalization related to students as outlined in various university documents include interculturally competent and sensitive

---

Figure 1 Desired Outcomes of Internationalization for the University of Alberta

Related to students

producing interculturally competent and sensitive graduates
(University of Alberta, 1993; University of Alberta, 1995)

developing staff and students who are trained for local and global service and citizenship
(Senate Task Force, 1994)

developing students who have had a significant international experience
(Fraser, 1995)

producing graduates who can compete with other graduates worldwide
(Fraser, 1995)

Related to institutional outcomes

becoming recognized internationally as an institution of excellence
(University of Alberta, 1993; University of Alberta, 1995)

becoming the university of choice of the best students and scholars in the world
(University of Alberta, 1993)

achieving global status and leadership
(Senate Task Force, 1994)

becoming one of Canada's best universities
(Fraser, 1995)

becoming a highly respected university for the discovery and dissemination of knowledge
(University of Alberta, 1993)

(figure continues)

Related to institutional outcomes
increasing stature of the university and its students (Senate Task Force, 1994)
developing strong partnerships overseas (University of Alberta, 1993)
attracting world class research faculty (Senate Task Force, 1994)
maintaining a professoriate of international leaders in their field (Fraser, 1995)
Related to national and regional outcomes
a positive impact on local, provincial, and national economies (Senate Task Force, 1994)
helping to develop economic trading partners for the province (Senate Task Force, 1994)
Related to social outcomes
social and cultural benefits to Canadians and development partners and generally "sharing the wealth" (Senate Task Force, 1994)

Note. Items within each section are listed in no particular order.

graduates (University of Alberta, 1993; University of Alberta, 1995), staff and students who are trained for local and global service and citizenship (Senate Task Force, 1994), students who have had a significant international experience (Fraser, 1995), and graduates who can compete with other graduates worldwide (Fraser, 1995). In terms of institutional outcomes, the list ranges from becoming recognized internationally as an institution of excellence (University of Alberta, 1993; University of Alberta, 1995) and becoming the university of choice of the best students and scholars in the world (University of Alberta, 1993) to the development of strong partnerships overseas (University of Alberta, 1993) and attracting world class research faculty (Senate Task Force, 1994). Desired national and regional outcomes include a positive impact on local, provincial, and national economies and helping to develop economic

trading partners for the province (Senate Task Force, 1994). On a societal level, the University's tacit goals of internationalization include social and cultural benefits to Canadians and development partners and generally "sharing the wealth" (Senate Task Force, 1994).

The University of Alberta's desired outcomes for internationalization must further be set in the context of larger institutional strategies. As outlined in the university president's inaugural speech (Fraser, 1995), eight key strategies for the University of Alberta include a focus on quality, unrelenting assessment and monitoring of programs, teaching students to learn, service to the university's communities, being measured by national and international standards, more fluid management style, selective allocation of resources, and better employ of new and existing partnerships. Given these strategies, it is imperative that study abroad at the University of Alberta support institutional interests; with the current focus on quality assessment and selective allocation of resources, it is more important than ever to be able to rationalize university programs based on clearly articulated institutional goals and interests.

The University's approach to internationalization as articulated to date is an eclectic mix of competitive and liberal frames of reference with a nod to a more socially conscious perspective. University documents reflect a significant interest in enhancing the University's reputation abroad as an institution of world class standing, peopled by scholars and students who have achieved or will command respect in the global arena. This drive for enhanced reputation, along with a documented interest in the impact of internationalization on the local, provincial, and national economies, indicates a focus which is justifiably self-promoting and advocates competition with foreign graduates and institutions as much as it speaks for collaboration. The University's stated interest in increasing students' intercultural sophistication may be read either

as an attempt to produce internationally competitive graduates, as a liberal bid to give students tools for international cooperation and understanding, or as both. A liberal concern for cross border cooperation is evidenced in the University's desire to accrue social and cultural benefits for its development partners as well as for Canadians. Finally, although numerous submissions mentioned in the Senate Task Force Report (1994) advocate international development work and awareness of social transformation issues (see International Centre, 1994 and the submission of the Centre for International Education and Development, not dated), the summary statements of the Task Force are not so clear on the subject of the University's role as a global citizen. More to the point, in other University documents which articulate the University's position on internationalization, the social transformation perspective is noticeably absent, suggesting that social conscience is only a marginal focus as the University pursues its international goals.

This discussion so far has begged the question: can a large, multi-faculty institution ever adopt a single perspective and remain true to its mandate? The University of Alberta has a responsibility to its stakeholders to represent a wide range of interests. In addition, each area within the University operationalizes the mission of the University in a slightly different way. It is not realistic to expect that one policy statement is going to magically align all perspectives across the campus and in the wider community, nor would one wish for that to happen. However, without strong guiding principles to contextualize the journey, a university community may find it has arrived at an overly materialistic or overly idealistic mode of internationalization which the university cannot and should not support.

Implications. The University's approach to internationalization as outlined above has several implications for study abroad and particularly

predeparture orientation. In supporting the competitive outcomes of the University's internationalization efforts, study abroad should provide an academically rigorous and personally challenging international experience to students. To this end, predeparture orientation should prepare participants for the academic and personal rigors of the abroad experience. Moreover, participants should be prepared in such a way that they are able to uphold the fourth of the Task Force's stated pillars of internationalization--ambassadorship. Although the ambassador role is not clearly delineated in the University documents, it follows intuitively that students who are good ambassadors of the University will in turn give strength to the University's good name abroad by creating a positive and lasting impression in the name of the home institution. In supporting the University's liberal aims for internationalization, study abroad should in fact be a conduit for mutual interest sharing between the University and its partner institutions. Again, predeparture orientation is implicated in that students should be prepared to be ambassadors of that mutual goodwill which ultimately paves the way to collaboration on wider interests. Finally, to accommodate the University's nod to social justice and North-South development issues, it is important that study abroad programs incorporate North-South linkages and that student preparation spell out the university's interests, albeit limited to date, in this regard (see end of chapter for definitions of North and South).

Education Abroad and Predeparture Orientation at the University of Alberta

The Education Abroad Program (EAP) at the University of Alberta forms one part of the International Centre, which opened its doors as the Office of International Student Affairs in 1983, branched off to include the International Student Centre in 1984, and was restructured in 1988 to include its present

divisions of development education, foreign student services and programming, and education abroad.

The Education Abroad Program currently offers a predeparture orientation program for many of the students who participate in its approximately 80 arrangements for students in 17 countries each year, yet the goals of the University with regard to study abroad, the needs and interests of student participants and the resources available through academics and practitioners in the field have never been systematically examined. Valuable knowledge and expertise are lost each semester as new orientation coordinators redesign the program as they see fit, with minimal knowledge of institutional foci, participant needs, or theoretical considerations. The disadvantage is to student participants, the institution's vested interests in the program, as well as to the wider community.

The Education Abroad Program has experienced tremendous growth in student participation since it was officially launched in May 1991 (International Centre, 1994). Greater numbers of students are participating in student exchange and other education abroad programs and increasing numbers of students are approaching the International Centre for information regarding study, work, volunteer and educational travel opportunities. In 1986, six students participated in formal academic exchanges. By 1993, that number had jumped to 125. Prior to 1991, little support existed for students interested in education abroad, whereas the University currently offers students one of the most comprehensive education abroad services of any Canadian institution (International Centre, 1994), including 80 exchange agreements in 17 countries and a resource room containing information on over 5000 opportunities to work, volunteer, study, or travel abroad or elsewhere in Canada.

The vision for the Education Abroad Program at the University is intricately linked with the University's goals for increased internationalization (International Centre, 1994). In the spirit of the accord between the strategic plan, the Senate and the International Centre, the Education Abroad Program has set a goal of "2,000 students on campus each year by the year 2000 who have received academic credit for study outside Alberta" (International Centre, 1994, p. 9). In a panel discussion on the question entitled "What is an international university?" University of Alberta Chancellor Lou Hyndman declared his interest in seeing significant numbers of University of Alberta students and scholars abroad in the next decade.

Given the university-wide commitment to expand and develop internationally, and in light of the "2000 by 2000" goal of the Education Abroad Program, it is in the university's best interest to continue to undergird the programs which impact the value of study abroad experience. Excellent predeparture preparation could significantly impact students' readiness to fully participate in and gain maximum benefit from their international experiences. In addition, the institutional and administrative functions of the study abroad program (and of the University itself) could be seriously undermined if students are not properly prepared for their experiences abroad.

The Scope of the Study

Having articulated the institutional interests in study abroad and predeparture orientation, the question remains: how are students, in particular Canadian students, most effectively prepared to study abroad? Goals of the sponsoring institution must be taken into account, but the needs of participants and the voices of practitioners in the field must also be heard in order to fully understand what is important as students prepare for their experience abroad.

This study answers the question by considering the literature of sojourner preparation for the abroad experience, the perspectives of the sponsoring institution, other providers of predeparture preparation programs, participants who are preparing to go abroad, and returned participants who have completed a study abroad program.

This study is significant in that it provides valuable information about what is important in predeparture orientation according to experts, providers, and participants. The findings will enable study abroad program planners to tailor predeparture orientation programs to accommodate the goals of both students and program providers within the context of the literature. The findings will assist the University of Alberta and other study abroad providers, particularly in Canada, in improving the educational value of study abroad programs, to benefit the individual participants and the organization, agency or institution which offers the program. The ultimate impact of the study will be to enhance the effectiveness of orientation programming for study abroad and thereby advance toward the goal of greater international awareness across the campus and beyond.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine the perceived importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by experts, providers, and participants. Four questions guided this study.

1. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education?

2. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad in light of recent University of Alberta documents?

3. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad?

4. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad?

The study was delimited as follows:

1. For the survey, only past participants of a University of Alberta formal academic exchange during the period 1990-95 inclusive were considered.

2. Language and language preparation were excluded from the study as possible topics of discussion as these topics fall outside the parameters of most study abroad predeparture orientation programs and involve expertise which most study abroad professionals do not possess.

Limitations of the study are discussed below.

1. The nature of the University of Alberta's academic exchange program was a limitation. Participants in the focus group and questionnaire had been or were going to be fully integrated into the life of the host campus, with minimal support from host university staff. Aside from advance access to on-campus housing in some cases, on-site foreign student orientation for some, and limited support from the exchange liaison officer at the host university, students in the University of Alberta's academic exchange programs were expected to function in the normal host university environment without extra support. They enrolled in regular classes, usually given in the language of the host university,

alongside host nationals. This is a limitation in that predeparture orientation for full integration (sometimes called total immersion) programs without on-site staff from the home university will have different concerns than for example a fully supported residential program where regular home university classes are taught in an isolated villa by home university faculty in the language of the home university exclusively for students from the home university.

2. The fact that nearly all survey and focus group participants had studied or were going to study in Western, industrialized, English speaking countries was a limitation. Students who study in cultures which are less like their home culture will have somewhat different issues than would students who perceived that the place they were going or have gone was not very different from home.

3. A further limitation of the study was that numerous complex concepts or technical terms were involved which were difficult to operationalize. Concepts such as culture shock and cultural values could not be fully outlined for respondents but neither could they be excluded from the study.

4. A fourth limitation was the participants' varying experiences with predeparture orientation, particularly for the focus group members, who had participated in an orientation two weeks prior to the focus group. It is expected that previous orientation experience provided a framework for respondents' thinking but as such influenced their perceptions of what is important in preparing to study abroad.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the topic of predeparture orientation in the context of internationalization of higher education. The first chapter also outlines the scope and purpose of the study. Delimitations, limitations and definitions are also included.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature, including related topics, types of literature accessed for the study, the value of orientation, and components of predeparture orientation extracted from the literature.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in the study. The purpose, design, and sample of the study are explained, followed by a detailed description of methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research with specific reference to the focus group, interviews, and qualitative and quantitative portions of the questionnaire.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of 12 themes from across the data, with reference to the literature, conclusions from the study, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

Definitions

The following definitions or operationalizations used in this study are presented here in alphabetical order.

In this study, an expert is considered to be an academic or a practitioner in one of the several fields associated with international/intercultural education, e.g., education abroad coordinators, peace educators, or cross-cultural trainers.

For the purposes of this study, importance is operationalized as the significance respondents attribute to a particular item. Importance is expressed

by focus group members in terms of how often the theme was reintroduced into the discussion, the emphasis placed on the theme in the form of word choice, the number of speakers, and the number of verbal agreements ("yeah," "exactly"). Importance is expressed by interviewees in the length of time devoted to a topic and the emphasis placed on it in discussion. Importance in the questionnaire is operationalized as the high rating or ranking or both of a given item.

"Nations that were formerly categorized as First, Second, Third and Fourth worlds, or as developed or developing, are now referred to as nations of either the North or South. This new terminology is sensitive to the fact that each partner in development both provides and receives benefits, and neither is superior or inferior to the other. Far northern regions of the globe, although they technically are part of the North, share many of the developmental concerns of the South" (Senate Task Force, 1994, p. 58).

Orientation is used in this study to refer to programs, lasting from a half-day to one week, which prepare people to "understand and function effectively in a new or radically different environment" (Kohls, 1987, p. 91).
In this study, a study abroad participant refers to a student who is actively planning to study abroad or has already studied abroad.

Predeparture orientation refers to orientation programs which are conducted prior to a traveler's departure. Currently, at the University of Alberta, predeparture orientation programs are voluntary, one or two day workshops offered to students preparing to study abroad.

For the purposes of this study, preparation is taken to mean any activities or experiences undertaken by participants, on their own or with assistance, which affect their readiness to go abroad. A last minute trip to buy

winter boots may be just as much a part of the preparation process as is a formalized predeparture orientation program.

For the purposes of this study, a provider is an organization, agency or institution which offers one or more study abroad programs.

A sojourner is defined as a person who spends a period of time (usually at least a month) in a country to which he or she is not native. For the purpose of this study, the term sojourner was used to include study abroad participants as well as people whose experience abroad is not directly related to academic study. For instance, the literature related to cross-cultural corporate training makes frequent use of the term.

Study abroad as defined by the University of Alberta's International Centre refers to students' opportunities for or experiences with formal education outside of their home country (International Centre, 1994).

Student exchange refers to the movement of students from one institution to another based on an official agreement between departments, faculties or central administrations of two or more educational institutions whereby arrangements are made for students from each institution to study at the partner institution(s) (International Centre, 1994).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners in international education; organizations, agencies and institutions which send sojourners abroad; and preparing and returned participants of study abroad programs. The input of the first two groups is most readily accessible in the form of publications, guidebooks, and other documents, academic and otherwise, which implicate predeparture preparation for study abroad.

This chapter shows what type of literature was included in this study and highlights important components of predeparture orientation drawn from the selected literature.

Related Topics in the Literature

Although there is a growing body of literature dealing specifically with predeparture preparation for study abroad, a myriad of related topics form the foundation of this fledgling field. These topics will be mentioned here but will not form part of the larger discussion as such.

Topics which have potential implications for predeparture preparation for study abroad participants include theories of intercultural communication (Bennett, 1986; Brislin, 1981; Samovar and Porter, 1994; Sarbaugh, 1979), intercultural competence (Dinges, 1983; Kealey, 1990), and personal and cultural adjustment (Adler, 1975; Anderson, 1994; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960; Sewell and Davidsen, 1956). The extensive literature around the foreign student experience has relevance to predeparture orientation as well, as study abroad participants

are considered foreign students during their sojourn. Other related fields include the nature and management of stress (seeing cultural adaptation to be a stressor; see Barna, 1983), the literature of grief (seeing cultural adaptation as grieving a loss of the familiar), and the literature around life stage development (focusing on the developmental tasks sojourners face notwithstanding their sojourn).

The literature ranges from rigorously academic treatises, such as Janis' (1985) study on anticipatory stress, to highly practical how-to manuals, such as Robert L. Kohls' (1984) handbook on preparing to go overseas. Some authors present intensely personal accounts of the sojourn itself, such as Jennifer Ladd's pseudo-memoirs about leading a semester abroad program in India, while others present a compendium of perspectives, as in Lewis and Jungman's (1986) international anthology.

Types of Literature

There seems no end of approaches to the phenomenon of people crossing cultures. At the same time, the literature dealing specifically with predeparture orientation for study abroad participants seems predominantly to target U. S. American audiences. No published work was found which specifically addressed predeparture needs for students from Canadian universities who were planning to study abroad. For this reason, this chapter includes writings which focus on structured preparatory programs for sojourners in general, not just those planning to pursue academic study while abroad. It will not distinguish between predeparture and in-country programming, nor between nationalities of author or audience.

As this is an exploratory study, the extent of the preparatory programs will not be taken into consideration. Obviously, the optimal content of a

preparatory program will vary depending on the length of time, frequency of sessions, and other resource-related factors. However, as resource allocation is a component of curriculum development which is external to this study, preparatory programs will be considered regardless of their rigor. The terms "orientation" and "training" will be used interchangeably throughout this study, without respect to the intensity which one may imply over the other.

The literature which relates to predeparture orientation for study abroad comes from a range of sources. Refereed journals and scholarly texts, documenting both theoretical postulations and research findings, form the skeleton of the available literature. What is needed to flesh out the body of literature, are the guidebooks, orientation agendas, and other tools used by practitioners in their orientation programs. Discussion in this chapter will draw from a mix of scholarly writings and practitioner documentations.

The practitioners' materials mentioned in this chapter are taken from readily available sources, such as the published guidebook of AFS (formerly American Field Service, now known by its acronym) (Grove, 1989), or were supplied by practitioners at 16 universities in response to my request over the Internet for materials currently used in predeparture orientation for study abroad.

The scholarly writings referenced in this chapter all have implications for predeparture orientation for study abroad, although not all of them are directed toward that topic in particular. For example, extensive use is made in this study of the literature around cross-cultural training.

> Cross-cultural training is designed to address those issues that arise when people of different cultural origins must work, study, or play together, at more than a superficial level. The concern is that they be able

> to interact successfully, accomplish what is important to them, and develop meaningful relationships. (Pusch, 1994, p. 109)

Cross-cultural training includes predeparture, in-country (during-the -sojourn), and re-entry programs of varying duration offered to students, technical assistance personnel, business people, the families accompanying sojourners abroad, and other sojourners. Other recipients of cross-cultural training include staff and faculty in higher education, host families, management of a multicultural work force, and trainers (Pusch, 1994).

The Value of Orientation for Sojourners

There is much speculation that orientation has a positive effect on the success (self-reported or otherwise) of people who are crossing cultures, particularly in relation to issues of cultural adjustment (Black and Mendenhall, 1991; Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Tonkin and Edwards, 1981). In their classic work on cross-cultural orientation, Brislin and Pedersen (1976) contend that the traditional "sink or swim" method of cultural exchange, i.e., without any kind of training, is neither the most efficient nor the most effective. As they point out, "'doing what comes naturally' varies from one culture to another and can be a perilous guideline for the sojourner" (p. 28). Goodwin and Nacht (1988) identify predeparture orientation as a crucial step in integrating international education into the life of the campus.

> Over the past 25 years, a large number of researchers have become involved in the careful evaluation of various intercultural training programs. The many benefits they have documented can provide very helpful guidance to administrators contemplating the development of new programs. Administrators can realistically adopt the goals of

> training represented in this list because they have been achieved by others. (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994, p. 169-170)

The many benefits identified by Brislin and Yoshida (1994) include the development of complex rather than oversimplified thinking about another culture (Gim, Atkinson, and Kim, 1991; Landis, Day, McGrew, Miller, and Thomas, 1976; Malpass and Salancik, 1977; Wade and Bernstein, 1991); decreases in reported levels of stress (Befus, 1988; Johnson, 1989); and greater ease in interacting with hosts, as perceived by the hosts themselves (Landis, Brislin, and Hulgus, 1985; Randolph, Landis, and Tzeng, 1977; Weldon, Carlston, Rissman, Slobodin, and Triandis, 1975).

One of the most common arguments in favor of orientation is the relatively high amount of difficulty related to adjustment sojourners report (Black and Mendenhall, 1991; Moore, 1987). Black and Mendenhall (1991, p. 178) note that

> despite the need for cross-cultural skills and the shortage of managers who possess these skills, most human resource decision makers do nothing in terms of cross-cultural training (CCT) for the employees in general or for selected employees embarking on international assignments (Baker and Ivancevich, 1971; Black, 1988; Runzheimer, 1984; Tung, 1984).... studies have found between 16 and 40 percent of all expatriate managers sent on foreign assignments return home before they are supposed to because of poor performance or the inability of the employee and/or the family to effectively adjust to the foreign environment (Baker and Ivancevich, 1971; Black, 1988; Dunbar and Ehrlich, 1986; Tung, 1981).

"More recent evident suggests that each [expatriate] failure could cost between $250,000 to $1 million per mission..." (Mead, 1994, p. 5).

Although it has not been shown conclusively that orientation reduces the risk of sojourner distress or premature return, there is a strong feeling among interculturalists and cross-cultural trainers that orientation can accomplish that and more (Black and Mendenhall, 1991; Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Foust, 1981; Goodwin and Nacht, 1988).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of adequate language preparation for sojourners (Deutsch and Won, 1963; Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman, 1978; Harris, 1973; Pruitt, 1978; Sewell and Davidsen, 1956). Klineberg (1981) asserts that students should have adequate academic preparation including language preparation and subject-specific prowess in order to fulfill the role of cultural and institutional ambassador. There is a growing field examining the connection between language and culture learning (see the recent special issue of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Fantini, 1995). However, the question of optimal language competence for study abroad typically falls in the realm of linguistics and language studies rather than in cross-cultural or intercultural communication. As a result, this study did not address the question of language.

Components of Cross-Cultural Training

The remainder of this chapter documents components of predeparture orientation which are discernible across the literature. Each component is discussed in terms of its treatment in various types of literature. In some cases, the written materials are contradictory; an attempt is made to give voice to the

opposing viewpoints. The list of components following is by no means the only way of categorizing the hundreds of elements advocated for sojourner preparation by academics and practitioners, but it provides a useful scheme by which to organize the concepts at hand.

Practical Arrangements

In their classic book on intercultural orientation (for the purposes of this study, "intercultural" and "cross-cultural" orientation are used interchangeably), Brislin and Yoshida (1994) identify "immediate concerns" as the most urgently needed component of preparatory programming for sojourners. The authors define immediate concerns as "issues that would otherwise distract trainees from fully involving themselves in the workshop" (p. 32). Examples of immediate concerns include housing, immigration information, health insurance, and other basic necessities.

Brislin and Yoshida (1994) explicitly identify immediate concerns with the lower levels of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy:

> unless basic human needs such as food, shelter, belongingness, and esteem are fulfilled, people are not psychologically prepared to seek further intellectual stimulation... Not only are these excellent starting points for discussion, but adding relevance to the participants' work leads to increased attention and interest, as well as to a higher likelihood of skills transfer. (Brislin and Yoshida, p. 34)

Other sources concur. In the NAFSA guide to education abroad (Summerfield, 1993), practitioners are advised to include the following practical information in orientations they offer:

- passports and visas

- international travel arrangements
- housing, host families, and meals
- packing, luggage, and shipping regulations
- phoning, mail, and other communications
- foreign currency, transferring money abroad, credit cards, etc.
- post arrival travel information (Eurail passes, international ID cards, youth hostel cards, guidebooks, etc.)
- legal considerations and responsibilities, waiver forms, etc.
- health and safety issues (see Summerfield, 1993 for extensive list of health and safety issues). (p. 141)

Among the 16 universities responding to my Internet request for orientation materials, all included practical components in their orientations. Specific components mentioned ranged from jet lag and measurement conversions to health and safety. See Appendix A for complete listing of these components.

Watts (1988) reports that of 197 education abroad professionals surveyed, 73% indicated that "survival" information is given primary emphasis in their preparation programs. According to the AFS orientation guidebook (Grove, 1989), a key objective of predeparture orientation is to give practical and logistical information as needed. Grove (1989) uses a model based on multiple concentric circles to describe the needs of newcomers, in which shelter, nourishment, elimination, and sleep form the core; social patterns, nonverbal behavior learning, cultural values, and other needs are on the periphery. "When those [needs] inside the center ring are dealt with satisfactorily, those inside the next ring become uppermost in mind" (Grove, 1989, p. 124). Foust (1981) states that preparatory orientation should give top priority to addressing

sojourners' immediate physical needs, as sojourners will be preoccupied until these needs are satisfied.

In a training video recently produced through the concerted efforts of several Ontario universities, some practical tips are given (World Within Reach, 1995). Tips include arranging for birth control, learning how to use electronic mail, and packing things from one's own culture as reminders of home.

In order to further understand the immediate concerns of people preparing to go abroad, it is helpful to look to the research around expectations or concerns sojourners have prior to departure. Two studies in particular provide useful information. In the most extensive study on sojourner expectation to date, Koester (1985, 1987), in cooperation with the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), surveyed approximately 5,000 study abroad participants from the United States and identified nine areas of predeparture concern, four of which could be considered logistical or practical concerns: housing, food, sufficient money, and health. In a follow up study with U.S. students studying at western European universities, Martin and Rohrlich (1991) identified 13 areas of concern, 7 of which could be considered practical concerns: housing, food, health, sufficient money, unfamiliar currency, extracurricular travel while abroad, and local transportation.

Other practical concerns advocated for inclusion in preparatory orientations include survival issues, legal status, and outlets for personal interests (Foust, 1981). In prescribing components of predeparture orientation for students in the U.K., Barnes (1991) includes work, transport, money, and phones as immediate concerns to be addressed with sojourners.

Academic Life Abroad

In the context of immediate concerns, numerous authors stress the importance of providing orientation related to the primary task of the sojourner while abroad, be it vocational, academic, domestic, or some other kind of task. For employees working abroad and their families, primary tasks might include domestic information, management and technical factors (Mead, 1994; see also Black and Mendenhall, 1990); for students the tasks relate to academic issues. Related to student concerns, the NAFSA guide to education abroad advocates briefing students on the following academic items: pre-arrival forms for course work (if required), credit-approval policies upon return, and pre-registration for the next term (Summerfield, 1993). Barnes (1991) includes university registration, grading, and timetables for classes in the academic section of an optimal orientation. Klineberg (1981) stresses that the student should be well informed about the nature of the host university, including rules and regulations, the relations between students and faculty, in order to fulfill the role of ambassador for the culture and the institution.

Academic issues were mentioned by nearly every university which responded to the Internet request for orientation materials. Academic and other home institution concerns include financial aid, registration, credit transfer, academic advising, housing upon return, independent study, the role of the International Office, and career advising.

A frequent topic of discussion among study abroad professionals is how academic work carried out at a foreign institution can be assigned commensurate credit and sometimes grades at the home institution. Often students do not know until they return how much academic recognition in the form of transfer credit (or the equivalent) they will receive for foreign course

work. Klineberg (1981) suggests that "this whole issue of equivalencies may cause frustration and even heartbreak to many students, consequently affecting their degree of satisfaction with their foreign sojourn and contributing to their sense of success or failure. In the latter case, the role of culture-carrier will hardly be facilitated" (p. 122). Any effort on the part of sending institutions both to create structures to facilitate credit transfer and to inform students of these structures is to be applauded. According to Klineberg, information about the administration of transfer credit should ideally be included in orientation for people preparing to study abroad.

As a gauge of the importance of credit transfer in the field of study abroad, a number of national and international associations and agencies in international education sponsor ongoing projects related to credit transfer and foreign credential evaluation. These interested parties include NAFSA: Association for International Educators (Handbook, 1990), Nuffic: Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (van der Wende, 1994), and the British Council (1991). In 1994, UNESCO and the Council of Europe published a joint brochure offering updated information on the European National Information Centres (ENIC) and recognition and mobility of students in higher education. One of the main functions of the ENIC, established in June 1994, is to provide information assisting institutions in evaluating course work students complete abroad. In 1994, the Canadian government established the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), which handles referrals, information sharing and data gathering for international recognition of educational and occupational credentials.

Closer to home, also in 1994, the Alberta government established the International Qualifications Service which performs a similar function at the

provincial level. This office services the credential evaluation needs of a number of Alberta postsecondary institutions. Concurrent to this study, the University of Alberta conducted a campus wide project with the goal of standardizing credit transfer practices to facilitate program advising as well as approval of credit transfer. Credit transfer is a going concern in international educational exchange today.

An additional academic consideration for study abroad preparation is the recognition that teaching and learning methods differ significantly around the world. Opper, Teichler, and Carlson (1990) found that over half the European and U.S. orientation programs they studied included orientation related to study patterns and teaching methods at the partner institution. Other topics which could significantly impact students' readiness to function optimally overseas include cognitive styles and the structuring of papers and arguments (Lieberman, 1994; Moore, 1987; Powell and Andersen, 1994).

The developers of the recent Ontario predeparture orientation video recommend that students find out about academic procedures, facilities, and relationships to professors before departing to study abroad (World Within Reach, 1995). The video further warns students that their academic performance may worsen but advises them to learn about the academic system beforehand, study in a consistent fashion, and try not to get frustrated with the different approach to learning.

Tailored to study abroad, then, academic concerns to be addressed in orientation include the grading system at the host university, university registration procedures at both the home and host institutions, selecting classes at the host institution, academic skills needed abroad, getting home university credit for coursework completed abroad (credit transfer), and study patterns and teaching methods at the host institution.

Interaction

Numerous authors advocate interaction during orientation with host nationals or "old hands" who have spent a significant amount of time in the host country (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991). For purposes of study abroad, the interaction approach might involve people from the host country or university or people who have studied or are studying abroad at the host institution or elsewhere in the host country. Although not strictly a content item for orientation, this interaction approach to orientation is noteworthy because so many orientation programs currently use it in some form. Gudykunst and Hammer (1983) advocate interaction-based training as one of three major building blocks of cross-cultural training design.

The interaction approach is appealing because it can accomplish several agendas. It allows for credible presentation of area- and culture-specific information. Host nationals may feel valued in that they are set up to be the experts. This in turn can lead to a greater level of commitment to and sense of integration at the host institution. This is particularly important if retention or recruitment of host national on the home campus are goals of the program. Past participants can experience a similar sense of "being useful" and valued by the home institution, which may increase the likelihood that they will be active advocates for study abroad among their peers. In addition, the interaction approach can facilitate ongoing linkages between returning host national and students preparing to go. In this way, the connection between individuals and institutions carries on during the sojourn.

In describing predeparture orientation programs for study abroad, Opper, Teichler, and Carlson (1990) noted that even in the context of formalized

orientation programs offered by institutions, students were none the less prepared to a large extent by their peers.

> The most frequent procedure (in 84% of the programmes) is to put the group about to go abroad in contact with those who have just returned from the same programme. In a majority (61%) of the programmes, students at the partner institutions abroad also have some input into the preparation of study abroad participants. (Opper, Teichler, and Carlson, 1990, p. 42)

The recent Ontario predeparture video also advocates students making contact with past participants as well as exchange students on their campuses in order to be better prepared for the abroad experience (World Within Reach, 1995). In fact, the video is itself an example of the interaction approach in the age of multi-media: it consists largely of past and current exchange students giving candid advice to the viewers, who are presumably preparing to study abroad. In this case, video is the next best thing to being there.

Past participants and exchange students currently on campus were included in the orientations of the majority of universities which responded to the Internet request for materials. Involvement of these students includes meeting in small groups by program or country, discussing dos and don'ts for study abroad, presenting practical information, and providing reports and photos. One orientation leader writes, "Past participants are an excellent source of information... I think these are usually the best sessions and new participants feel like this is the most helpful" (electronic mail submission to Internet request for orientation materials).

Culture-General Information

At the heart of cross-cultural training is the concept of culture. This section will show some common concepts of culture from the literature with a view to identifying the importance of culture related components in preparation programs for sojourners. It should be noted that the term "culture-general" refers to aspects of culture which may be said to be universal, in contrast to constructs specific to a particular culture or group of cultures (Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983). For example, the classification of all cultures on a continuum from task-orientation to relationship-orientation would fall under the heading culture-general, while the description of task-orientation in Germany constitutes a culture-specific position.

Culture has been defined in many ways (see for example Hall, 1976a; Kluckhohn, 1949). According to Brislin (1993) and Brislin and Yoshida (1994, pp. 118-119), culture (a) consists of concepts, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are widely held, (b) is passed from generation to generation, and (c) becomes clearest when people interact with others from very different backgrounds. According to Sikkema and Niyekawa (1987), "We need oxygen to survive, but, because it is all around us, we do not notice it until we are deprived of it. The best way to become aware of how culture-bound we are is to step our of our own culture" (p. 36). Kohls (1984) puts it this way:

> Culture is an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of a particular group of people. It includes everything that group of people thinks, says, does, and makes -- its systems of

> attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation. (p.17, emphasis in the original)

Perhaps the most concise yet useful definition of culture is Lustig and Koester's (1993): "We define culture as a learned set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people" (p. 41).

Hall (1976a, p. 16) suggests that "culture is man's medium: there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture." He calls culture a silent language consisting of "words, actions, postures, gestures, tones of voice, facial expressions" that make up "complete communication systems" (p. 42). Hall describes culture as a kind of sensory screen: "Selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that experience as it is perceived through one set of culturally patterned sensory screens is quite different from experience perceived through another" (1966, p. 2). He goes on to say, "...culture therefore designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore. This screening function provides structure for the world and protects the nervous system from "'information overload'" (1976, p. 85). As Thiederman (1991) puts it, "Culture simplifies the everyday decisions of living" (p. 3).

Despite the pervasive nature of culture, it is almost entirely out of consciousness.

> Most of culture lies hidden and is outside voluntary control, making up the warp and weft of human existence. Even when small fragments of culture are elevated to awareness, they are difficult to change, not only because they are so personally experienced but because people cannot act

> or interact at all in any meaningful way except through the medium of culture" (Hall, 1966, p. 188).

As Thiederman writes (1991), paraphrasing Ruth Benedict, "It is hard to become aware of the eyes through which we see" (pp. 26-27).

If everything we say and do is permeated by our culture, then it follows that effective communication between people from different cultural backgrounds necessitates some common understanding of one another's culture. However, the nature of culture leads us to assume that our culturally based perceptions will be shared by everyone around us.

> One last reason we expect everyone to behave like us is that we couldn't function if we didn't. The minute you're no longer sure how people are going to behave in a particular situation -- when you start doubting what you know from experience to be true of the world -- you will no longer be able to engage successfully in day-to-day life... We expect people -- all people -- to think and act the way we do because we have to in order to survive. (Storti, 1994, p. 6)

If we are not aware of our own cultural filters and assume that others see the world in the same way as we do, the messages we send may not communicate what we intend them to and we will find it difficult to communicate effectively across cultures. One of two fundamental objectives in AFS's orientation for young sojourners is to promote intercultural learning through "reducing the degree of ethnocentricity with which the exchangee view the values, habits of thought, and patterns of behavior of unfamiliar cultures" (Grove, 1989, p. 10).

Opper, Teichler, and Carlson (1990) offer interesting evidence which challenges the cross-cultural trainers' notion that departing study abroad participants should receive training in cultural issues. The European/U.S. American study found that "participants in study abroad were already internationally oriented to a large degree before the actual study abroad period" (Opper, Teichler, and Carlson, 1990, p. 211) and that "they had hardly moved further in this direction after their experience abroad" (p. 144). This finding raises the larger issue of participant selection and qualification. If students already possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will help them to be successful while studying abroad, then the issue of preparation for overseas experience becomes almost moot. Instead, emphasis would be on providing participants with orientation to the particulars of the program offering the overseas experience. The question remains, then, which knowledge, skills and attitudes make for successful overseas experience and to what extent study abroad participants already possess them, whether through careful selection or by virtue of the type of student who is likely to study abroad.

According to the NAFSA guide to education abroad, helping students build culture general skills may be the most crucial aim of an orientation program for study abroad (Summerfield, 1993). Entire college textbooks have been written to help students "learn to communicate with people whose cultural heritage makes them vastly different" (Lustig and Koester, 1993, p. xv). Culture learning is a necessary part of predeparture orientation for study abroad. The question then becomes how this vast body of complex concepts can be translated into knowledge, skills and attitudes which are accessible to student preparing to study abroad. For this reason, culture-general training

often becomes an issue of awareness and skills training. The following section describes one approach to culture-general training.

Learning How to Learn

According to the NAFSA guide to education abroad, "the 'how to learn' orientation is more effective than trying to impart extensive information on host cultures in the limited time available" (Summerfield, 1993, p. 143). Summerfield (1993) suggests orientation time is best spent helping students understand that they will have to make efforts to gain culture-specific knowledge on their own.

The learning how to learn approach is particularly relevant to this study as it constitutes one of eight articulated strategies for the University of Alberta (Fraser, 1995) and as such supports a specific institutional interest.

Integrating learning how to learn into cross-cultural training has found substantial support among international educators. Writing about experiential learning theory and international education, Janet Bennett (1988) asserts, "it is up to the professional international educator to prepare sojourners to learn how to learn while overseas" (p. 113). To countermand the attitude of dependency some sojourners develop during their training, McCaffery (1986) proposes a new model of cross-cultural orientation and training which aims "to move people towards developing/enhancing the skills they need to become independently effective cross-cultural sojourners" (p. 166). Sikkema and Niyekawa (1987) describe a groundbreaking program for sojourner preparation which is "designed to produce multiculturally-oriented individuals rather than experts in any specific culture" (p. 26). In their classic book on intercultural training, Brislin and Yoshida contend that

> for culture-specific knowledge, the most effective approach is for trainees to "learn how to learn" because the amount as well as the types of knowledge needed will not only be immense, but will change over time. (p. 54)

Experiential techniques are not new to the classroom (Asuncion-Lande, 1979; Hoopes and Ventura, 1979; Kohls, 1979) but are still valued for their effectiveness in training people who are crossing cultures (Bennett, 1988; Hughes-Wiener, 1995; McCaffery, 1986).

Area- and Culture-Specific Information

By far the most often mentioned topics in the literature for inclusion in predeparture orientation relate to information about the host country, host culture, or both. The term "area" is useful in that it may refer to a region of the world, such as Southeast Asia; to a country; or to a region within a country, such as Quebec. In this way, area-specific training may apply to Peace Corps volunteers who will be traveling to the same cluster of villages, as well as to a group of study abroad participants who will be studying at different universities throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

In his practical handbook for people preparing to go abroad, Kohls (1984) exhorts his readers: "Know thy host country" (p. 43). He lists 50 questions sojourners should be able to answer about their host country prior to departure. Brislin and Yoshida (1994) point out that "specific knowledge regarding topics such as history, sociology, geography, politics, and economics helps trainees engage in intelligent conversations with people from the host country... Hosts appreciate trainees who have 'done their homework' and who are informed about their culture" (p. 32-33). Harris and Moran (1991) also provide an

extensive checklist of knowledge areas to know when going abroad. Economics, sociology, climate, history, geography, politics, and quality of life are other area-specific topics discussed in the literature (Brislin, Landis and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994).

Information about the host culture is mentioned with more or less specificity in most texts dealing with cross-cultural training. Topics which may be addressed in the general or specific include work, time and space (e.g., punctuality, personal space), language, nonverbal behavior, roles, behavioral styles, individual-collective distinctions (e.g., cohesiveness of family unit, attitudes toward ownership versus sharing), rituals and superstitions, hierarchies (class and status), and values of the host culture (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980; Paige and Martin, 1983). Notable are the cultural patterns described by Hofstede (1980) and Hofstede and Bond (1988): power distance (comfortable level of familiarity with authority figures), uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and Confucian dynamism. Gudykunst and Hammer (1983) identify culture-specific information as one of four categories into which they classify orientation topics. They define culture-specific knowledge as an understanding of people, customs and institutions of the host country. Everyday behavior in the host country and "practical culture" are also mentioned as important in culture-specific training (Barnes, 1991; Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983).

The 1995 Ontario video project also advocates students learning about dating, body language, and what is normal or acceptable in the host country (World Within Reach, 1995). Speakers on the video recommend students establish a framework of information about the country which they can fill in once they are abroad, particularly by reading works from and about the country.

Eight of the 16 universities which responded to my Internet request for orientation materials indicated that they include information about the host institution or country in their orientation. Information includes academic practices, teaching methods, registration, granting credit, things to find out about the host country, and sources of information about the host country.

Along with learning about the host country, several sources stress the importance of learning about one's own country and culture prior to departure. Summerfield (1993) points out that students will be de facto representatives of their country and as such will be expected to know about its history and current affairs. Grove (1989) recommends that participants become knowledgeable about their home country and community; this provides them with a frame of reference from which to learn about the host country and community and prepares them to be more informed citizens on their eventual return home. Further, two goals of Grove's predeparture training (1989) are to help exchangees better understand their own system of culturally determined values and behaviors and to enable exchangees to better describe their own country and community while they are abroad.

According to Klineberg (1981), foreign students should know enough about their own culture to serve as mediators or cultural ambassadors. "If students could be convinced in advance of the importance of the mediating function, they might also be persuaded to regard a fuller knowledge of their own society as an essential part of their preparation for the foreign sojourn" (Klineberg, 1981, p. 122). "More [students] would probably...play a more important role as cultural ambassadors, if it were brought to their attention that this was expected of them; those responsible for administering exchange programs might be encouraged to include this in their briefing" (Klineberg, 1981, p. 127). In fact, Klineberg (1981) points out that "students and professors

visiting another country can serve as cultural ambassadors, as links between cultures, but they will usually be successful in this role only if they are informed in advance that this is expected of them and given the preparation and training which the role requires" (p. 134).

Adjustment

The literature around sojourner adjustment is extensive. Van den Broucke, De Soete, and Böhrer (1995) suggest that "the prediction of overseas success or failure remains one of the most intriguing issues within the field of intercultural research" (p. 73). They continue,

> When the concept of "overseas effectiveness (Hawes and Kealey, 1980) and related notions such as "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960), "cultural and social adjustment" (David, 1972), "cross- cultural effectiveness" (Ruben and Kealey, 1977), and "intercultural competence" (Dinges, 1983) were introduced to describe the dynamics and problems associated with adapting to an unfamiliar culture, an impetus was given to the endeavor of finding ways to control and to predict the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, intercultural researchers whose task is to prepare people for life and work overseas, have developed selection and training procedures to enhance the chances of successful overseas assignments. (pp. 73-74)

There has been little debate among interculturalists about the necessity of preparing sojourners for the adjustment they will face. Central to this agreement is the belief that "if people are unprepared for the adjustment that is necessary on an overseas assignment, they may mistakenly attribute the normal stresses and strains of everyday life to their own failures" (Brislin,

Landis, and Brandt, 1983, p. 22). According to the AFS guidebook, one of two fundamental objectives of orientation is to prevent culture shock "through reducing the unpredictability facing the exchangee " (Grove, 1989, p. 8). In the task of maximizing the effectiveness of sojourner experiences, preparation for adjusting to another culture is sine qua non.

Twelve of the 16 universities which responded to the Internet request for orientation materials address cultural adjustment in their programs. Variations on this theme include being happy with oneself, coping strategies, stages of adjustment, keeping an open mind, re-entry, stereotypes of Americans, and cross-cultural awareness.

Although there is agreement on the necessity of preparing sojourners for cultural adaptation, there is a plethora of approaches to cultural adaptation. The process of adjusting to a new culture has been described using a variety of models and perspectives. Anderson (1994) identifies four broad families of models which describe the process of adapting to another culture: as recuperation, as learning, as psychological journey, and as homeostatic mechanism.

The recuperation models highlight the process of recovering from culture shock as a mechanism for accommodating to life in strange new lands. Culture shock was defined by Kalvero Oberg in the late 1950s as "a medical condition describing feelings of disorientation following entry into a new culture, feelings often so strong as to degenerate into physical symptoms" (Anderson, 1994, p. 294). Also in the mid 50s, Du Bois (1953) and Lysgaard (1955) described the U-shaped curve of cultural adjustment which is still one of the most commonly used models of adaptation today. "To oversimplify considerably, the U-curve begins with a relatively happy first phase, experienced as an exciting adventure; then there is a trough in the curve, as the

student becomes involved in difficulties of various kinds and as he has to face his problems in the university and the society in general; and finally, a relatively high point again as he succeeds in this process before he prepares for his departure" (Klineberg, 1981, p. 125). To Anderson's list could be added Sewell and Davidsen's (1961) W-curve model which graces so many orientation programs in North America today. The W-curve extends the U-curve by adding a similar dip and rise to describe the frustration and eventual adjustment often associated with returning home. Other modern variants posit culture shock not as a disease but as a crisis of personality or identity (Adler, 1975; Bennett, 1977; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Harris and Moran, 1979, 1991; Pearson, 1964; Weinmann, 1983).

The second family of models suggested by Anderson (1994) identify adaptation as a learning process (Byrnes, 1965; Ezekiel, 1968; Guthrie, 1975; Lee, 1979). Anderson (1994) summarizes, "Sojourners adrift in a sea of perceptual and behavioral anomalies and difference are in a state of ignorance. To adapt, they must learn the parameters of the new sociocultural system and acquire the sociocultural skills necessary for participating in it" (p. 294). One school of thought within this family of models argues that intercultural communication is the core of cultural adaptation (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Gardner, 1952; Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman, 1978; Nishida, 1985; Ruben, 1976; Ruben and Kealey, 1979). A second grouping of authors approach cultural adaptation as a process of learning socially appropriate behaviors, primarily through operant conditioning (David, 1976; Guthrie, 1975; Mischel, 1973; Pedersen, 1983; Triandis, 1980; Wallace and Atkins, 1961).

The remaining two families of models identified by Anderson (1994) conceptualize adaptation as "a step-by-step psychological journey from the fringes to the center of a foreign culture, from a state of denial or ignorance to

state of understanding and empathy (e.g., Bennett, 1986; Gochenour and Janeway, 1977; Jacobson, 1936; Stewart, 1977)" (Anderson, 1994, p. 295) or as a homeostatic mechanism which is in the constant process of maintaining equilibrium (Barna, 1976; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1987; Spradley and Phillips, 1972; Torbiörn, 1982; Wong-Rieger, 1984). Anderson describes the latter as "a dynamic and cyclic process of tension reduction" (p. 295).

In addition to the models identified by Anderson, there is a growing body of literature which describes adaptation as a type of stress which can therefore be understood and managed in accordance with the copious research on stress (Barna, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Harris and Moran, 1979, 1991; Walton, 1990; cf. Holmes and Rahe's [1967] Social Readjustment Scale).

Despite the belief some authors and even more practitioners hold in the importance of preparing sojourners for the adjustment to life abroad (Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Kohls, 1984; Mead, 1994; Torbiörn, 1982), there is still some controversy over the generalizability of the adjustment research. In her trenchant categorization of adjustment models to date, Anderson (1994) notes that

> some investigators find no culture shock or crisis reported at all (cf. Byrnes, 1965; Lundstedt, 1963) or reported only a feeling of 'general irritation' (Torbiörn, 1982, p. 70). The universal validity of the curve approach itself is dubious. It has long been known that some people never adapt; some slide inexorably into chronic alienation (Campbell and Yarrow, 1958); others adapt in a slow and steady linear pattern, without discontinuities (cf. Kim, 1978; Klineberg and Hull, 1979; Selltiz, Christ, Havel, and Cook, 1963). We still do not know why this is so. (p. 297)

Whatever the model or approach, the literature is clear: people who would be successful at crossing cultures should be aware of the adaptation process in theory as well as appropriate coping strategies. At the same time, the goal of adjustment preparation will be determined in part by the model of adjustment to which one subscribes. If culture shock is seen as an illness, then preparation should prevent or inoculate sojourners against it. The goal of training would be to minimize or prevent culture shock from occurring. Yet if cultural adjustment is seen as a learning process, optimal orientation would prepare sojourners to receive maximum benefit from the experience through cognitive and emotional readiness and other competencies related to experiential learning. Here again, curriculum planning necessitates the identification of broader goals before specific instruction can be planned.

Re-entry

> Culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar.
> Reentry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar.
> --R. M. Paige in Martin, 1986, p. 149

Related to cultural adjustment is the issue of re-entry. Numerous works address the phenomenon of adjusting to the home culture upon return from the sojourn, with the understanding that the readjustment process may be as difficult or more difficult than the adjustment to the host country (Chinn, 1992; Denney, 1986; Greenwood, 1991; Kauffman, Martin, Weaver, and Weaver, 1992; Kenny and von Klemperer, 1992; Kohls, 1984; Milenko, 1983). In addition, Brislin (1981) stresses the importance of preparing sojourners before they go abroad to think in terms of the impact their experience will have on their lives. He argues that this kind of proactive thinking will enable sojourners to more effectively focus their activities and attitudes abroad in order to maximize the long-term benefits of the experience abroad. According to the NAFSA guide to

education abroad, the importance of re-entry programs is now widely recognized (Summerfield, 1993). Dr. Marvin Westwood (1984) of the University of British Columbia has made great strides in putting together a practical yet theoretically grounded handbook for persons assisting international students with the re-entry process.

Re-entry programs prepare participants for understanding and minimizing the effects of reverse culture shock often experienced by sojourners (Grove, 1989; Martin, 1986). They help students readjust to their home country and campus life "after an intense period of living on the educational and social terms of a foreign culture" (Pusch, 1994; Summerfield, 1993) and help students develop realistic expectations (Martin, 1986). Re-entry programs help students to understand and articulate what they have gained during their time abroad (Grove, 1989; Pusch, 1994; Summerfield, 1993). Through re-entry programming, participants consider how they might incorporate the learning, academic and otherwise, from their abroad experience into their lives (Pusch, 1994; Summerfield, 1993). In addition, re-entry programs benefit the sponsoring institution by providing an means to evaluate the program (Grove, 1989).

As with adjustment, it is important to note that one's philosophy of readjustment will impact the goals of re-entry programming. For instance, if readjustment is essentially a process of reincorporating oneself intact, with minimal upset, into one's previous life, than re-entry programming will target skills and attitudes which will allow for a seamless transition from sojourn to home. For many educators, however, readjustment is part of a personal transformation which may involve the dissolution and reconceptualizing of self and of home. Orientation would then incorporate self-awareness and evaluatory exercises which would encourage the sojourner to investigate the

process of self-identification and move toward a reconceptualization of self and home.

Self-Awareness

Along with an understanding of culture, adjustment, and re-entry, some practitioners and academics believe that people preparing to go abroad need to have a basic understanding of themselves before they can fully enter into the abroad experience (Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991; Triandis, 1977). They need to understand their own reactions to stress (Barna, 1983); they need to recognize behaviors and attitudes which are culturally determined but personally owned (Kohls, 1984; Ladd, 1990; Storti, 1989); and they need to have realistic expectations of their own abilities and of what they will be able accomplish during their time abroad (Kealey, 1990; Kohls, 1984; Ladd, 1990; Pusch, 1994).

This kind of self-awareness is identified by Sue et al. (1982) as one of four critical awareness competencies, was later expanded by Pedersen (1988), and was reintroduced by Brislin and Yoshida (1994) as a key component in intercultural training. Paige and Martin (1983) note that orientation programs frequently address "personal characteristics: flexibility-rigidity, openness-ethnocentrism, etc." (p. 54). The 1995 Ontario training video includes numerous references to self-awareness preparation in the form of taking chances, having an open mind and respectful attitude, and taking "by the horns" this once in a lifetime opportunity (World Within Reach, 1995). The AFS guidebook indicates that participants are given ample opportunity to discuss fears and apprehensions and modify inappropriate expectations (Grove, 1989). Of course, careful thought must be given to the techniques used to accomplish this particular goal of

orientation. It may be more damaging, and is certainly ethically questionable, to lay bare student fears and expectations without proper affirmation and discussion than to avoid the topic entirely.

Grove (1989) further stresses with participants before, during, and after the selection process that the heart of the abroad experience is personal growth and challenge. Given this commitment to the personal development of participants, it is understandable that that particular program would advocate a self-awareness component in predeparture orientation. However, as may be seen above, the support for self-awareness training is widespread and is inextricably anchored in the intercultural literature.

Global Perspective

One component of predeparture orientation which is conspicuously absent from the cross-cultural training and study abroad orientation literature is students' global responsibility. This philosophical discussion is carried on in the literature around global education and development education but seldom is the question of students' part in a global future articulated in the training literature around study abroad. Perhaps it is unfair to suggest that students' roles in shaping the world order is neglected by study abroad professionals, given that so much has been written about the value of study abroad for building bridges between cultures and advancing institutional, regional, and national understanding and cooperation. However, these outcomes of study abroad are not the only ways in which students are a part of a global framework, and predeparture orientation should reflect this.

Key concepts within global education as articulated by Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (1987) include militarization, structural violence, human rights,

cultural solidarity, environmental care, and personal peace. Dialogue and an understanding or "conscientization" with regard to the interdependence of lands and people are essential components of education for a global perspective (Toh, 1993; Toh and Floresca-Cawagas, 1987). Numerous materials exist for use in developing global awareness and the will to act in more globally conscientious ways (Greig et al., 1987; Hicks, 1988; Pike and Selby, 1988; Reardon, 1988; Selby, 1987; Toh and Floresca-Cawagas, 1987 and 1990).

In NAFSA's guide to education abroad, Summerfield (1993) includes two carefully worded paragraphs under the heading "global citizenship." One sentence in particular stands out: "During orientation, it is important for them [students] to explore questions concerning their responsibilities in an interdependent world" (p. 146). This sentence opens the possibility that students do have responsibilities in a world where interdependence means more than sharing global markets but also includes working in solidarity with brothers and sisters around the world to ensure global justice. Toh's (1993) and Warner's (1993) social transformative paradigm/model is just one example of ways in which students could be challenged to see the world from a broader view. Global perspective is not on the agenda of most predeparture orientation programs. Is this an oversight or a philosophical statement on the part of trainers and the institutions they represent?

Summary

This chapter outlines related topics in the literature, shows how the literature was selected for the purpose of this study, indicates the value of orientation for people preparing to go abroad, and highlights important components of predeparture orientation drawn from across the selected

literature. The literature selected for this study included academic writing and practical materials pertaining to sojourner preparation for going abroad. It was clear from a long list of benefits that orientation for sojourners can be invaluable. Components of predeparture orientation were discussed which were discernible across the literature. Components discussed were practical arrangements; academic life abroad; interaction with past participants of study abroad and students from abroad currently studying at the home university; culture-general matters and the difficulty of effectively communicating them in a study such as this; knowledge about the host country and culture, and knowledge about one's own country and culture; learning how to learn; cultural adjustment; re-entry orientation; self-awareness; ambassadorship training; and global perspective.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. The general purpose and design of the study are explained, followed by a detailed description of methods of data collection and analysis for the approaches used. Data collection was carried out using a focus group, individual interviews, and a survey questionnaire. Qualitative data were analyzed using open coding techniques; descriptive statistics for quantitative data were generated using SPSSX for Macintosh.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the importance of components of predeparture preparation for study abroad as perceived by participants, providers and experts. In particular, the following questions guided this inquiry.

1. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education?
2. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad in light of recent University of Alberta documents?
3. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad?
4. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad?

The Research Design

Data for this study were collected in the spring and summer of 1995 using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods (see Table 1). Data from academics and practitioners were collected using document analysis and individual interviews. Data from the University of Alberta were collected using document analysis. Data from University of Alberta study abroad participants who were planning to study abroad were collected in March using a focus group interview. Those students who had previously studied abroad on a University of Alberta exchange were invited to participate via a mailed questionnaire in June and July. All data were collected by August and analyses were completed during August and September.

Table 1

Research Design for This Study

Data	Source	Method
academics and practitioners	literature practitioners	document analysis interviews
University of Alberta	documents	document analysis
participants preparing to go	students	focus group
returned participants	past participants	questionnaire

The research design was divided into several stages. From the relevant literature, themes were identified. Education abroad providers were interviewed. A focus group was conducted with students preparing to study abroad in order to gather the students' ideas on the importance of topics for study abroad preparation. These data were then factored into the themes from

the literature. A questionnaire was developed from this composite list of themes and mailed to all known past participants in the University of Alberta's study abroad program from 1990 to 1995 (see Appendix B for questionnaire).

The remainder of this chapter describes data collection and analysis for the focus group, interviews and questionnaire.

Focus Group

Rationale

Data from students preparing to study abroad were collected using a focus group interview. A focus group was selected as one data collection method for this study because of the desirability of gathering rich qualitative data, the potential to produce a wealth of information in a short period of time (Bers and Smith, 1988), and what has been described as a "synergistic group effect" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990; Sussman et al. 1991). When first invited to take part in the focus group, some of the participants expressed concern that they did not believe they had anything to contribute to the discussion. These hesitations suggested to me that the students would respond better within the synergistic milieu of a focus group rather than in the isolation of an individual interview or a mailed questionnaire. In this way, the students could see themselves as a group of experts where they may not have seen themselves as experts individually.

In spite of their many advantages, focus group interviews come with a price. Due to the influence of the group members on each other, data collected through focus groups may be more skewed than data from individual interviews (Sussman et al., 1991). For the same reason, focus groups may yield up to 70% less than individual interviews (Fern, 1982). Confidentiality and anonymity are harder to preserve among focus group members, although

having the group members sign confidentiality agreements beforehand may increase the security of the data (Berg, 1995). However, the most serious disadvantages of focus groups are more or less common to all forms of qualitative data: severely restricted generalizability and the opportunity for misinterpretation (Kops and Percival, 1990). In this study, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and the focus group went forward.

Groundwork

Planning for the focus group began several weeks before the participants actually convened for the group session. The first step in the planning was to state clearly the question to which the data were intended to speak. In this case, the question focused on the needs and interests of students preparing to study abroad with regards to components of predeparture orientation for study abroad. In other words, what were the students' phenomenological experiences with preparation for study abroad and what were the implications for a predeparture orientation program?

From this first step, the second two steps followed naturally: the identification of the target population and the determination of the interview questions. Clearly, the target population was the approximately 50 University of Alberta students who were preparing to go abroad at the time of the study (early 1995). Similarly, the interview questions came out of the central questions: Are you ready to go? What do you still have to do before you will feel ready to go? Thinking about the recent predeparture program in which you participated (discussed below), how beneficial was that program for you? Before students go abroad to study, what do they need to know? What is important in predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants? (See Appendix C for focus group questions.)

Although the foundation was laid, there were still several considerations before the focus group could convene. The ideal size for a focus group is a matter of debate, but most suggest that 8-10 is ideal, although as few as 6 individuals may be used (Berg, 1995; Lengua et al., 1992; Morgan, 1989; Pramualratana et al., 1985). To ensure a sufficiently large sample, I spoke to 35 members of the target population while they were attending a predeparture orientation meeting offered by the International Centre at the University of Alberta in early March. I provided orientation participants with information about the study, invited volunteers, and informed them that a meal would be provided at the focus group (see Appendix D for copies of handouts). Ten students completed volunteer sheets, seven of whom were able to participate at the agreed upon time in late March. One student completed the form only to indicate her unwillingness to participate; another was participating in an exchange within Canada, while yet another was unexpectedly called away on business at the time of the session.

Conducting the Session

Once the participants were assembled, several introductory and ethical measures were taken. I introduced myself, welcomed the students and tried to ensure everyone was fed and comfortable. The research assistant, who aided in directing the discussion and took notes on the proceedings, also introduced herself. To warm up the group and get everyone talking, the students were asked to tell the group briefly their first name, where they would be studying, and what motivated them to study abroad at this time. Last names were avoided to preserve anonymity. The study was then explained and the procedures of the focus group session were made clear, including the voluntary nature of their participation, the right of each person to opt out of the study at

any time, the confidentiality and anonymity of participation, and the fact that the session would be tape recorded. To ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, participants signed forms indicating their willingness to participate in the study and to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the focus group session (see Appendix E for focus group consent and confidentiality form). Participants were allowed an opportunity to ask questions or raise objections before the session began.

The session went according to plan. The assistant, being more experienced with focus groups, began the discussion with some general questions (see Appendix C for list of focus group questions) which were targeted to focus the students' thoughts on their preparations for studying abroad. The group was quick to laugh and seemed to relax within the first few minutes. I then asked questions related to the predeparture orientation program in which the students had all participated two weeks previous. Every effort was made to elevate the discussion from an evaluation of the previous session to a more general dialogue about why certain components were more beneficial than others. Periodic attempts were made to draw out two of the more laconic participants but without much success.

At a pause in the conversation, I interjected with the third and more abstract line of questioning regarding what knowledge, skills and attitudes students should have before they go abroad to study. As anticipated, the participants had much to say about concrete knowledge but had to be prompted before they spoke to the more ephemeral topic of skills and attitudes. As a wrap up, the fourth line of questioning asked the students to identify what they considered to be important components of predeparture orientation for study abroad.

At precisely the agreed upon stopping time, I closed the session by thanking the participants and inviting them to help themselves to left over food. Although they were free to go, the participants stood around and talked with one another for fifteen minutes after the conclusion of the session.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the audio tape shortly after the group interview using Microsoft Word 5.1. Then I checked the transcript against the tape three times for accuracy. Nonfunctional colloquialisms such as "like" and "you know" were eliminated where syntactically irrelevant.

The data were sorted inductively according to broad themes which emerged from the transcript. I read through the transcript several times, circling sections of text which seemed to be self-contained units of thought. Some units consisted of one word, such as "res" (residence), while others went on for several pages, such as the discussion of gypsies in Europe. Units of thought were then "cut" from the transcript using Microsoft Word 5.1 and "pasted" into data files so that related units of thought formed a general theme, with a different file for each theme. Some themes, such as family and friends (home), were easy to identify and define. Others, like information accessing (how students access information in preparing to study abroad), required more definition and more digging. Some sections of the transcript seemed to be related to several themes and were included as evidence in each of the possible theme files. After the initial coding, the transcript was re-examined for unsorted data and inconsistencies. Each theme was also double checked against the master transcript for accuracy of quotation and line numbers.

Analysis of each theme was concerned with the frequency of mention, particularly how often the theme was reintroduced into the discussion, and the emphasis placed on the theme in the form of word choice, number of speakers, and number of verbal agreements ("yeah," "exactly"). Themes were then ranked by category by the strength of support each theme received. For example, a statement such as, "... be prepared to be kind of lonely at first..." which was followed by a "yeah" and a "right" would be ranked higher than a phrase such as, "I think a really good thing is to get more into customs and stuff," which produced only silence.

Several difficulties arose during the transcription and coding of the data. The participants in the study shared the habit of peppering their speech with "you know," "like," and "I mean," when they did not appear to imply a literal interpretation of those colloquialisms. As far as possible, such incidental bywords were omitted from the transcript where they appeared to serve no explicit purpose. A second difficulty concerned confidentiality and anonymity. Students often made reference to the country, university or language with which they were involved or otherwise identified themselves through mention of personal data such as place of work. To omit such identifying data at times threatened to weaken their testimony, as in the case of the woman who mentioned the name of a holiday on which she would be attending classes overseas. Only one of the current exchange partners of the University of Alberta hold classes on this day, so the name of the holiday was omitted but with it was lost the emotive impact of her statement.

Further considerations arose in coding the data. Officially, the session had been audio taped, not video taped, but I retained a mental image of the session. Therefore, I am privy to information which is not available to the person who must rely on the written transcript or audio taped record. For

example, the following comment appears to be ambiguous but to those who were present at the time it was made, the meaning is clear: "I thought it was interesting. I don't know if I thought it was really helpful. Okay, you look at the chart, okay...." The speaker was politely saying that he did not think the topic at hand was important; moreover, he was bored by the way in which it was presented. In the same way, one "yeah" may denote enthusiastic agreement, where another "yeah" may signify doubt. All this is evident to the moderators but remains hidden from those who were not present at the session.

A third consideration arose in data analysis on the matter of group versus individual data. Although a primary virtue of focus group interviews is the collaborative meaning-making which goes on within the group, it seems that an analysis of individual data would yield potentially useful findings. For example, some topics are mentioned primarily by one student. Should those data be discounted or weighed less heavily because they have the verbal support of only one student? Perhaps not; the others may disagree with the lone voice, or they may just as well be in agreement but feel no need to add to what the first student has already said. On the other hand, if the only two students to raise the issue of language are the two students who are going to countries where they do not speak the language, surely their suggestion that language training be included should not be discounted for lack of support.

Participants' comments fall into two broad categories: topic areas and sources of information. Themes included under topic areas were: friends and family (home), re-entry, money, living arrangements, appropriate attitudes, health, paperwork and work permits, safety, practical cultural tips (for example, how to operate pay telephones in the exchange country), language, student expectations (for example, whether they intend to confirm a career choice or

just have a good time abroad), culture and religion, social life abroad, race/class/gender issues abroad, credit transfer, and cultural adjustment. Sources of information included the following themes: others' experiences, orientation programs, specialized information, other resources, fellow exchangers, previous travel, information accessing, and preparedness. An analysis and discussion of each theme follows in the next chapter.

Interviews

In addition to the focus group interview, information was solicited from providers of predeparture training for organizations not affiliated with the University of Alberta. Interviews were used because they are adaptable, permit in-depth probing of information, and tend to yield more complete data than other forms of survey research (Borg and Gall, 1989). The purpose of these interviews was to gather data about the research question, "How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by practitioners associated with international/ intercultural education?"

Sample

Predeparture programs for people traveling abroad are often unstandardized, haphazard, and undocumented. For this reason, one of the most accurate and accessible sources of information on predeparture programs often are the people who develop and implement the programs. In fact, in this study, one organization declined my request to share its written materials or to be involved in the study to prevent replication of their programs.

Two highly qualified interviewees were selected to participate, based on the following requirements: (a) they offered predeparture orientation training for sojourners who were preparing to go overseas for a limited time (less than two years), (b) the majority of their trainees tended to be of similar age and stage of life to the majority of the University of Alberta's study abroad participants (generally between 18-30 years old and by and large not yet established in a career field), (c) their training programs reflected a significant commitment to predeparture preparation in terms of planning and implementation, and (d) their overseas programs had been established for at least five years. In this way, the interviewees were speaking from a frame of reference which was sufficiently similar to that of the University of Alberta's programs for comments to be relevant to the study.

The two program providers who were interviewed met the above criteria and were recommended by members of the international education community locally for offering excellent predeparture training. Both interviewees are directly involved in the planning and implementation of predeparture training programs for their respective organizations. Although one made available written materials about the training and one did not, both interviewees were asked exclusively about their professional experience with and perception of predeparture training in general rather than in reference to their specific organizations.

Format

A semistructured interview format was chosen because it involved predetermined questions which would target specific areas of interest but also allowed me to probe particularly useful topics as they arose (Berg, 1995). The

semistructured interview schedule ensured that I solicit information about specific areas of interest, namely, what the trainers perceived to be: (a) the most important components of predeparture orientation, (b) important knowledge to have before going abroad, (c) important skills or abilities to have before going abroad, and (d) important attitudes to have before going abroad. These topics were related to those asked of other participants in the study. The unplanned probes allowed for digression and free exploration of unanticipated avenues of thought, such as the link between preparation for departure and preparation for return or re-entry. To this end, an interview schedule was developed which included essential questions as well as a list of probing questions to be used as needed (see Appendix F for interview schedule).

Structured questions were designed according to sojourner competencies, namely, knowledge, skills and attitudes sojourners should have before they go abroad (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994). In this way, the trainers were encouraged to speak not only about specific components of predeparture programs but also about desirable training outcomes in terms of competencies. This approach provided valuable data on broader goals of predeparture training as well as specific components as advocated by the trainers.

Conducting the Interviews

Three participants were identified in consultation with several local members of the international education community. In February, all three received a telephone invitation to participate but one was excluded because the available trainer was only peripherally involved in the planning and

implementation of the predeparture program. The subsequent two interviews were conducted in early March. One interview took place in the first trainer's home and the other in the trainer's office. Each interview lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. Before each interview, I explained the nature and purpose of the study as well as the confidential and voluntary nature of the interviewee's participation (see Appendix G for interview consent form). Participants signed forms indicating their informed consent to participate in the study and to be audio tape recorded during the interview. Participants were promised that neither they nor their agency/institutional affiliation would not be identified in conjunction with any information they might provide during the interview. This procedures was used to circumvent obtaining permission from organizations.

The interviews proceeded as planned. Each interview started with general conversation. I had met each of the participants prior to their interviews, and the atmosphere at each interview was congenial. Both indicated at the outset that the presence of the tape recorder and the official nature of the interview made them somewhat uncomfortable. In addition, the interview held in the participant's home seemed especially strained due to the interviewee's and researcher's unfamiliarity with hostess-guest behavior norms. Yet while answering the questions, this first participant seemed to be caught up with the topic at hand and showed no signs of discomfort, with the exception of comments like "I'm a little unclear about what to focus on." Otherwise, she had no difficulty expressing herself.

Analysis

I transcribed the interview tapes shortly after the interviews; analysis proceeded similarly to that for the focus group. The transcripts were checked against the tapes three times. Nonfunctional colloquialisms such as "like" and "you know" were eliminated where syntactically irrelevant. Interview data were then analyzed using an open coding technique (Berg, 1995). I read through the transcripts several times and identified words and phrases from each transcript which seemed to form discrete units of thought. Related words and phrases were then "cut" from the transcript using Microsoft Word 5.1 and "pasted" into data files so that each file contained related ideas, thereby forming a general theme within each file. Some themes, such as re-entry, were easy to identify and define. Others, like institutional support, required more definition and more digging. Some sections of the transcript seemed to be related to several themes and were included as evidence in each of the relevant theme files. After the initial coding, the transcript was re-examined for unsorted data and inconsistencies. Each theme was also double checked against the master transcript for accuracy of quotation and line numbers. Concepts which were mentioned more frequently or with stronger language were so noted on the theme pages. For example, returning to the home culture was noted as a key concept in the first interview because the participant introduced the subject without prompting, spoke about it at length, and reintroduced the topic even after I tried to move on to a new subject.

Questionnaire

Thus far, this research study had considered the perceived importance of components of predeparture orientation by consulting academics and practitioners in international education, recent University of Alberta

documents, and University of Alberta students who were planning to study abroad. At this stage in the research (in June and July 1995) data from past participants of the University of Alberta's Education Abroad Program were collected using a mailed survey questionnaire. A questionnaire was selected because of its usefulness for objectively gathering large amounts of quantifiable data. In the case of this study, the desired data involved past participants' perceptions of the importance of select components of predeparture preparation for study abroad.

Objectives

The first step in designing the questionnaire in early spring was to define the objectives specifically as related to the research question, "How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad?" The function of the questionnaire in this study was to validate data from the literature, interviews and focus group by soliciting respondents' perceptions of predeparture orientation components. For this reason, it was necessary to quantify how important the components were perceived to be. In addition, the survey was intended to capture components the respondents believed were important but which may not have been identified through the literature, the interviews, or the focus group.

Sample

The second step in designing the questionnaire survey was to select a sample. The accessible population identified for the survey consisted of the 145 students identified by the International Centre as having participated in the University of Alberta's student exchange program between 1990 and 1995. This particular time period was selected because it provided a large enough

accessible population from which to draw sufficient amounts of data for statistical analysis and because it included the most recent returnees, who could arguably provide the most vivid and accurate information. Students who studied abroad more than five years prior to the study were not seen to be as reliable reporters of their experience as those students whose experience was more recent. The actual sample included 130 students from the above 145; one student was excluded from the study because he could not be located, one was excluded because he withdrew from the program before going abroad, and 13 were discounted because they were still completing their study abroad experience and as such were not considered past participants.

Constructing the Questionnaire

The third step was to construct the questionnaire, which was undertaken in June 1995. No survey instrument could be found in the literature which measured perceived importance of components for study abroad predeparture preparation, and so a new questionnaire had to be created. To facilitate coding and analysis, most questions were closed form and included rating, dichotomous, numeric, contingency, and ranking response choices. A few open ended questions were used at the beginning and end of the instrument to allow respondents a less structured avenue for expressing their views. The open ended questions at the beginning of the questionnaire were designed so that respondents could recall their personal experiences with study abroad preparation and thereby be prepared to respond accurately. I feared that without such stimulation, participants who studied abroad five years prior might have difficulty remembering their experience clearly. In addition, the open ended questions served to avert any frustration the students might have experienced as a result of having to translate their highly subjective experiences into

quantifiable terms. Open-ended questions also made it possible to capture any data which were not otherwise taken into account in the questionnaire.

Every effort was made to construct items according to good rules of practice (Borg and Gall, 1989). Specifically, items were checked for clarity and technical words by two graduate students in similar programs, the supervising faculty member, and the coordinator of the University of Alberta's Education Abroad Program. Double barreled items were simplified and negative items were avoided. Items were shortened when lengthy and sharpened when vague.

The greatest difficulty was to express accurately and simply the complex concepts from the literature without leading the respondent. For example, some authors suggest that people preparing for a sojourn abroad should be aware of the predominant values of the host culture, including power distance, individualism, and task orientation (Hofstede, 1980; Weaver, 1994). It was assumed that many respondents would not be familiar with these concepts but would be familiar with their practical manifestation. For example, a student may wish she had known the Mexican hosts would be offended if she did not show a personal interest in them before discussing academic matters. Some authors (Hall, 1976b; Weaver, 1994) would say this culture-based behavior is an expression of low task orientation typical of Mexican culture. However, without knowing what task orientation involves, the respondent cannot reasonably be expected to express her sentiment by checking a box labeled "understanding task orientation in host country is very important before you go abroad." At the same time, if concepts like task orientation had been explained in the questionnaire, the extra attention paid to the concept could have led the respondents to think it was more important

than items which received less extensive treatment. Items had to accurately capture the constructs in terms the respondents could understand.

Specificity was also a serious concern in wording the items. For example, one strong theme from the focus group data was the need to discuss the realities of leaving behind friends and family, issues around returning home to friends and family, and ways of coping with this set of challenges. It was difficult to select a short phrase which could be readily understood by everyone and yet fully capture the gist of the topic. The phrase "friends and family" is too vague to illicit a clear picture in students' minds. "Coping strategies for dealing with saying good-bye, being homesick, and returning home" is more accurate but too cumbersome to be useful. In the end, the more pointed phrase "communicating with friends and family while abroad" was used.

Outline

The introductory notes to the questionnaire again made clear the nature and purpose of the study and the confidentiality of responses. A prize was awarded to one of the respondents who returned the questionnaire within 18 days of being mailed to respondents. The prize draw information for early respondents was indicated in large, bold font, as was the desired date of return. Respondents were directed to answer the questions based on their experiences on their first University of Alberta study abroad program. It was suggested that respondents might review photographs or journals from their study abroad experience before completing the questionnaire.

The opening section of the instrument included questions about gender, country of study abroad, age at time of study, number of months of study abroad, registered Faculty at home university during study abroad, and

undergraduate/graduate status during study abroad. This information was useful in determining patterns by demographic category. Open-ended questions provided students an opportunity to start thinking about their own study abroad preparation. Specifically, questions asked about things they did and did not do in preparing to study abroad, if they attended an orientation session before they studied abroad, and if they did, what was good and what was lacking in this session.

In the second section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate, based on their experience, how important they perceived each of a list of components of predeparture orientation to be. The rating scale options were don't know (1), not important (2), somewhat important (3), and very important (4). Potential components were identified through data gathered from the literature, interviews and focus group. Components which recurred in the data were included, as were components which were strongly advocated by some data sources but not by others. The components were grouped according to four themes: practical arrangements, academic life abroad, self-awareness, and adjustment and readjustment with 10, 6, 6, and 6 items respectively. The rating system provided for clear results indicating the perceived importance of any given component. At the end of each thematic section, respondents were asked to fill in boxes labeled most important, 2nd most important, and 3rd most important to indicate the three components in that section they perceived as being most important. The ranking system served as a check for the rating sections and gathered data about which components under each theme were perceived to be the most important.

The third section of the instrument was a continuation of the second in that respondents rated the importance of potential components of

predeparture preparation taken from the literature, interviews and focus group. The novelty of this section was that the components were presented as they applied to the host country and to the home country independently. For example, one item asks how important it is to know something about arts and literature in Canada while another asks how important it is to know about arts and literature in the host country. Items are grouped into national, institutional or regional concerns and cultural issues, which contained 20 and 15 items respectively. Each section was followed by boxes in which respondents could identify and rank the most important, second most important and third most important items in the section.

The fourth section of the instrument directed respondents to rate how important they perceived specific resources to be in preparing to study abroad. The same four point rating scale was used as in previous sections [don't know (1), not important (2), somewhat important (3), and very important (4)]. The list of 14 resources was developed from the literature, interviews and focus group, as well as from predeparture materials used by other program providers. The final items ask respondents to fill in boxes to rank the resources into the three they believed to be most helpful, second most helpful, and third most helpful as in other sections.

A section dealing with philosophical questions was placed near the end so that respondents would be sufficiently immersed in thoughts of study abroad to be able to respond to abstract questions. The section asked that respondents rank order a series of statements in order of importance (1 being the most important, 2 the second most important, and so on) for each of the 11 statements. Statements represent major philosophies of internationalization from the literature, from recent University of Alberta

documents, and from the International Centre staff. Key philosophies or models of internationalization include Warner's (1993) market and liberal models, which may be compared with Toh's (1993) liberal-technocratic paradigm, and the social transformation paradigm (Toh, 1993) or model (Warner, 1993). For validation purposes, two statements were given representing each of Warner's three models and two were given representing the University of Alberta's documents. In addition, three statements were included which read, (study abroad should) "allow students to pursue their (1) professional (2) academic (3) personal goals." Students were asked to rank the most important item, second most important item, and so on, by writing the rank number in a box opposite each statement.

The questionnaire concluded with three open-ended questions designed to capture data which were not addressed in other questions and to allow respondents to wind down after the approximately 30 minutes they spent with the survey. The first question asked respondents to list orientation components which may not have been mentioned in the survey. The second question asked what the respondent believed to be the most important part of preparing to study abroad. Data from this question were useful in determining what students believe should definitively be included in preparing to study abroad. The final question encouraged respondents to write comments about the survey itself. In this way, subjects could conclude the questionnaire experience with a sense of having had an opportunity to speak their minds.

Pilot

After the questionnaire had been designed but not yet formatted, it was piloted with four participants from the accessible population in mid June. The pilot study was undertaken in order to improve data-collecting procedures, provide ideas and approaches not previously considered, and greatly reduce the number of treatment errors in the larger study (Borg and Gall, 1989). This kind of "dress rehearsal" for the study is particularly valuable in situations where the researcher is unfamiliar with the data collection technique (Berg, 1995, p.56), which was the case. Subjects for the pilot were selected from those past participants who could be readily contacted and lived in the local area. Pilot subjects were apprised of the nature and purpose of the study and of the confidential and voluntary nature of their participation. Each completed and wrote comments about the draft instrument independently either in the International Centre or in their home.

The pilot study brought to light a number of concerns about the design of the instrument. All four subjects indicated that the questionnaire looked too crowded. I had expected this response as the questionnaire had not yet been formatted. Each of the subjects had a different and incorrect interpretation of the instructions for section IV, the section dealing with national and regional issues. The items listed in section IV were called into question by one subject, who wrote, "some of these things are also a bit irrelevant in my opinion." One participant commented that the section dealing with philosophical matters, section V, was unrealistic and "weird." Based on the comments of the pilot subjects, I completely reworked the phrasing of those questionnaire items and instructions which had been called into question.

Layout

After the questionnaire had been piloted, the fifth step was to design the layout (Borg and Gall, 1989). The main concern was to affect the response rate positively by presenting the respondents, most of whom were in their early 20s, with an attractive, professional document which more closely resembled interesting junk mail than a stilted piece of research. Using a desktop publishing package, a publications professional transformed the draft, which consisted of four densely packed pages of microscopic font, into nine spacious and aesthetically pleasing pages of easily readable text. The slogan "speak your mind" was printed in a contrasting style in the upper left hand corner of each page in order to lighten the tone and create a unified look. Additional efforts at increasing response rate included holding a draw for early respondents to win a gift certificate, printing the instrument on colored paper, and including a self-addressed, stamped return envelope.

The questionnaire was designed to be easy to complete. Clear instructions in bold type were placed in wide margins so there could be no question about what was expected. Questions with rating scales were placed together for respondents' convenience. The initial section "eased respondents in" by asking simple and straightforward questions such as gender.

A cover letter was sent with the questionnaire for a number of reasons (see Appendix H). First, the letter introduced the study and the survey. As such, it was printed on official International Centre letterhead and signed by the coordinator of the education abroad program, who would be a familiar and credible figure to most respondents. Second, the letter explained the purpose and nature of the study and the confidential and voluntary nature of

the respondents' participation. Third, the letter served as a tangible record for the respondents of their participation and provided them with contact information should they chose to contact me in the future. Fourth, the letter met ethical concerns of the study by providing the basis for informed consent. For those recipients of the questionnaire who chose to complete and return the questionnaire, the act of responding was taken as implied consent. The option not to respond constituted the respondents' ethical right to opt out.

Conducting the Survey

Questionnaires, cover letters and self addressed stamped return envelopes were mailed to the 130 viable participants in late June. Respondents were asked to return the survey within 18 calendar days of the date the questionnaires were mailed. Questionnaires were marked with a code number corresponding to a confidential list of subjects, making it possible to identify respondents for the gift certificate giveaway and nonrespondents for follow up phone calls. The codes and returned questionnaires were accessible to me alone and were secured in separate locations in order to protect confidentiality. Names and other personal data which could be used to identify individual participants did not appear on the returned questionnaires and will not appear in any reports associated with the study.

Response

Thirty-one responses arrived by July 14, the cut off date noted on the questionnaire. The winner of the prize was picked at random and received the gift certificate by mail the following week. On July 17 and 18, follow up phone calls were placed to the nonrespondents, 22 of whom promised to

return the questionnaire; 14 eventually did. Repeated attempts were made to reach the remaining nonrespondents by phone. By August 29th, a total of 57 completed questionnaires were received.

A number of participants were excluded from the study as they never received the questionnaire. Twenty-two participants were confirmed to be out of the country or otherwise unreachable. Twenty-one questionnaires were returned unopened due to incorrect addresses. Only one of those participants was eventually reached at a new address, meaning 20 were unreachable. The 20 returned incorrect addresses plus 22 unreachable made a total of 42 participants who never received the questionnaire and so could not respond. Excluding these 42 from the 130 questionnaires sent to legitimate past participants, the response rate was 65% (57/88), which is the rate used in this study.

Analyses

The initial task in analysis was to design the coding procedure. I created a code book in which each closed question was assigned a variable number from V1 to V150 (see Appendix I for coding information). In the code book, I identified every possible response to the closed questions and assigned each response a numeric code. In dichotomous questions (Q. 1, 3, 6 and 9), the first response received a code of 1, the second a code of 2 (e.g., Female [1], Male [2]). Responses to fill-in questions (Q. 2, 4, and 5) were assigned a numeric value during the coding process (e.g., Sweden [8]). The scale questions (Q. 11-17) were coded on a four point system (don't know [1], not important/helpful [2], somewhat important/helpful [3], and very important/helpful [4]). Respondents who indicated more than one answer in the dichotomous or

scale questions received a -9, which was counted as a missing value. For ranking questions at the end of each scale section, a numeric value was assigned to each possible letter response (e.g., a [1]). Each statement of philosophy (Q. 18) was considered to be a separate variable and was coded with the rank number which the respondent assigned to it.

Once the code book had been created, I designed a database spreadsheet in consultation with research advisors in the Department of Education at the University. The spreadsheet consisted of 156 columns, labeled "ID," "V1," "V2," and so forth, up to "V155." The identification number from each questionnaire was entered into the first column in order to identify the data in that row. Data were entered onto the spreadsheet by two assistants using the code book; I then verified the data item by item. The data were checked visually by column (i.e., by variable) to ensure that no incorrect values were recorded. Several mistakes were found and corrected. Data coding, recording and checking required approximately 30 hours.

Responses to open questions (Q. 7, 8, 9a, 9b, and 20) were recorded on paper by question and then grouped by topic. For example, topics for Q. 7 included learning the language, obtaining information about the host university, and 14 other responses. Each response topic was assigned a number. Q. 8 had 13 response topics, Q. 9a had 14, Q. 9b had 16, and Q. 20 had 7. Each open question was assigned a variable number from V151 to V155 and data from those questions were recorded in the appropriately labeled columns. Responses to the question inviting comments on the survey itself, Q. 21, were grouped by theme and are presented in Appendix J; these result are not discussed in this report as they do not bear directly on the research topic.

Quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed by a research consultant in the Faculty of Education using SPSSX for Macintosh. In keeping with the

research question, which asked how important selected components of predeparture orientation for study abroad were considered to be, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. The relatively small sample size precluded the use of more sophisticated statistical measures. In addition, there is little support in the literature for differentiation between responses for one demographic group and another. As a third consideration, the program which the study was designed to inform was not concerned with differentiating between groups of study abroad participants. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analyzed using open coding. Findings are described in the following chapter.

Coding of Broad Themes

Once the data from each source had been analyzed, broad themes were drawn from across the data. A summary of findings was prepared by source and was used to identify general themes; findings were divided into these themes until all the findings were accounted for. The themes were then analyzed and are described in the following chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, the research methodology and data analyses techniques were explained. The research methodology involved gathering data from academics and practitioners through data collection and interviews; from the University of Alberta through document analysis; from students preparing to study abroad through a focus group; and from past participants of study abroad through a survey questionnaire. In all, one focus group and two individual interviews were conducted, and 130 questionnaires were mailed for an adjusted response rate of 65%. Focus group and interview data were analyzed using

open coding techniques and a word processing computer application. Questionnaire data from open-ended questions were also analyzed using open coding, while quantifiable questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSSX for Macintosh. Findings are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 Findings

Introduction

A focus group, two interviews, and a questionnaire were used to collect data from students preparing to study abroad, providers of orientation programs other than at the University of Alberta, and past participants of the University's study abroad program respectively. Data were gathered to a) determine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by those three sources and b) validate perceptions of importance as indicated in the literature and University of Alberta documents.

This chapter presents the findings of this research with specific reference to the focus group, interviews, and questionnaire. Findings for each of these will be presented through a brief introduction and summary of data analysis methodology, followed by a report of the research results and a summary.

Purpose of the Study

Study abroad programs have potential to benefit the participants as well as serve larger institutional interests. Yet without adequate orientation prior to students' departure, the effectiveness of study abroad programming can be greatly affected (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981). The University of Alberta currently offers a predeparture orientation for those who participate in its approximately 80 arrangements for students in 17 countries each year. Yet the question remains: How are students, in particular Canadian students, most effectively prepared to study abroad? Goals of the sponsoring institution must be taken into account, but the needs of participants and the voices of practitioners in the field must also be heard if we are to fully understand what is important as students prepare for their experience abroad. This study answers that question

by taking into account the literature around sojourner preparation for the abroad experience, the perspectives of the sponsoring institution, other providers of predeparture preparation programs, participants who are preparing to go abroad, and returned participants who have completed a study abroad program.

The purpose of the study was to determine the importance of components of predeparture preparation for study abroad as perceived by participants, providers and experts. Four questions guided this study.

1. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education?
2. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad in light of recent University of Alberta documents?
3. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad?
4. How important are components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad?

Data from academics and practitioners were accessed through document analysis and through two interviews with people who provide predeparture orientation for sojourners. University of Alberta documents were analyzed to determine implications of recent University initiatives for predeparture orientation for study abroad. A focus group was conducted with seven study abroad participants preparing to go abroad. Finally, using the data collected from the other data sources, a questionnaire was developed and mailed to 130

past participants of the University of Alberta's study abroad program. 65% of respondents who were able to return completed questionnaires did so.

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted to determine what was important in predeparture orientation, and how important those things were, as perceived by students who were preparing to study abroad. The seven focus group participants were preparing to study abroad through a University of Alberta formal exchange. All 7 participants had attended an orientation program for study abroad two weeks before the focus group was conducted. The group members were asked, through a series of questions, what they believed to be important components of predeparture orientation for study abroad. The data were sorted inductively according to broad themes which emerged from the transcript of the focus group. Themes were then roughly ranked by the strength of support each received from the focus group participants. In turn, these broad themes seemed to fall easily into two types or categories: components to be included in predeparture orientation for study abroad, and sources of information participants might access in preparing to go abroad. An analysis of each theme is outlined below.

Components to be Included in Predeparture Orientation

Friends and family (home) was one of the first themes raised by the students and was reintroduced by students three times. Six of the seven participants commented on the difficulty of leaving family and friends behind. One student said she was "not ready mentally to be just ripped away from everybody". Another stated it was "folly" to leave without taking his family's feelings into account. Another commented, "It's important to remember ... you're probably an integral part of somebody's life and ... your leaving probably

affects them very much." The part of the previous orientation which dealt with whom you leave behind was "new information" and "a really important thing to talk about." Students made strong statements about the importance of this component of predeparture orientation. In particular, they felt it was important to be aware of whom they would be leaving behind and the impact that the sojourn might have on those relationships. They also stressed the value of addressing these issues with friends and family members before leaving to study abroad, in order not to be caught off guard by tensions with people back home during the sojourn and after it is over.

It should be said that the discussion grew out of a similar discussion which was held at the orientation the participants had attended two weeks previous. However, the focus group discussion achieved a depth which far exceeded that of the comments made at the orientation. Clearly, the question of how most effectively to prepare for the changes in those relationships as a result of the sojourn struck a cord with the participants that day.

Re-entry, that is, references to the students' return after studying abroad, was also strongly espoused as a topic of importance. The discussion of returning home grew out of the discussion of family and friends (home) and was discussed at length by five of the seven participants, four of whom spoke of the importance of understanding the re-entry process before leaving home. One student testified to his inability to integrate upon a previous return to Edmonton; he says, "when I came back, I had the worst time integrating myself back into life here in Edmonton [...] I ended up leaving again just because I couldn't, couldn't integrate." Another student pointed out that "you can go abroad and have a great time and whatnot, but this is where your life is, and you're going to come back here and you're going to have to adjust." Another noted the value of "clearing all the apprehension with the people that you

want to and [saying] wow, I can't wait to talk and see how things have been after that time."

Money was an important component for the group. Money was one of the first themes to be raised and was reintroduced on three occasions. Students expressed concern about several areas of financial affairs, including credit cards, bank cards and bank machines, exchange rates, transfer of money, how to get money overseas, and work abroad. Several people related horror stories of their own or their friends' financial catastrophes overseas. For one student, money was the "biggest concern" and has "wreaked havoc" with his preparations. He stated, "I need to have that sense of security with the money and then begin to plan otherwise."

Living arrangements were also a significant theme with the group, receiving four mentions by three students. Two people indicated that living arrangements were top priorities in their preparations. University-run housing (residence) was mentioned as an example of basic campus services about which several felt information was lacking. In describing a twenty minute video of town and campus being proposed by the group, one student mentioned that it should include shots of "res."

Appropriate attitudes were discussed by five students for some time, but as this was at my prompting and was not reintroduced, it does not appear this is a topic of great interest to the students in the focus group. Ideal attitudes for study abroad participants included: openness to change, willingness to look ignorant and ask for help, willingness to shrug off "jerks" and not take things personally, and having a holistic attitude toward the good and bad things to come. However, in terms of predeparture orientation, one student concluded "it's just something you, once you get caught in that situation, you realize there was nothing you could do to prepare for it."

Other. Several component themes emerged during the focus group session but were mentioned less often, were discussed with less enthusiasm, were mentioned by fewer students and received less verbal affirmation than the aforementioned themes. These less important component themes included: health, paperwork and work permits, safety, practical cultural tips (e.g., how to operate pay telephones in the exchange country), language, student expectations (e.g., whether they intend to confirm a career choice or just have a good time abroad), culture and religion, social life abroad, race/class/gender issues abroad, credit transfer, and cultural adjustment. With regard to language, it should be noted that the apparent lack of interest in language learning among the group may be explained by the fact that only two students were going to study in countries where they did not speak the language, and those two did verbalize their intent to learn some of the language prior to departure.

Sources of Information Participants Might Access

Interaction with past participants or visiting exchange students. By far the most enthusiasm in the focus group discussion centered around personal contact with people who had visited or who were from the exchange country and specifically the exchange institution in question. This unique source of information was introduced into the discussion on thirteen separate occasions and is the only identified theme which received hearty affirmation from each of the seven participants as something they valued or of which they would like to have seen more. Talking with people who have been there or are from there helps students get "a realistic sense of what [they are] getting into", is "really helpful," and for some was one of the best parts of the study abroad orientation they had attended two weeks prior. One student wished she had more time for that part of the orientation. She lamented, "We only had, what, was it two

hours, or one? I wish there was more time." When asked what they would include in an orientation program if they were designing it, the unequivocal answer came back: "Interaction with people that've been there. A huge thing."

Other sources of information for preparing to study abroad included books and personal research, but only one person mentioned having bought a book; language tapes were suggested but discarded in favor of face to face instruction; three separate probes regarding text or audio instruction resulted in a preference for personal contact with an information source.

Specialized information. A third emphasis with regard to information was a consensus by six students that information for study abroad participants should be more specialized to the geographic region or even to the exchange institution itself. The general opinion--all but one student spoke out--was that country- and campus-specific information was lacking and is important. It is not enough to have "glossy" photos of blue skies and happy people. The desire for "something more realistic" led the group to spin off ideas for a 20 minute, homemade video which student could produce and take with them to the exchange institution.

Summary of Focus Group Data

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution. They felt it was important to address issues related to leaving and returning to friends and family. They wanted to learn more about the logistics of living abroad in terms of money matters and living arrangements. They wanted to go abroad with appropriate attitudes, they wanted to learn from a person rather than a book, and they wanted more specific, realistic information about the place they were going. Their honorable mention list of components for study

abroad preparation included a bevy of practical themes (health, paperwork and permits, and cultural tips), academic concerns (credit transfer), self-awareness issues (student expectations and social life abroad), cultural adjustment, and national or cultural topics (language, culture and religion, and race/class/gender issues abroad).

Interviews

Introduction

Two interviews were held in early 1995 with women who were involved with predeparture orientation for organizations which send young people overseas from four months to a year. Sarah and Becky (pseudonyms) were asked in a variety of ways what they believed to be important in predeparture orientation for people going overseas. Key points are outlined below in order of decreasing importance as determined by the length of time devoted to a topic and the emphasis placed on it by the interviewee as determined by word choice, facial expression, and so forth.

Interview #1

Nature of abroad experience. Sarah stressed that the experience abroad involves "the sense that you can be anything you want to be," yet "on the other side of that is this incredible weight of ... loss of identity." She felt that sojourners are in an "act of defining" themselves and that "culture shock throws people for a loop that they can take years to recover from."

Experiential approach. In response to this re-invention of self undertaken by sojourners, Sarah had "a very, very strong bias towards the... taking care of people through personal confrontation, through personal enabling" in the form of experiential activities. She said,

> ...I think the best orientations that I've seen or been involved in have had to do with providing an experiential kind of way for a person to understand and begin to prepare for the ways that they might be changed and ways that they might change.

Further, she stressed that orientations be "...experiential because... we have to be a little in the face about these things." She went on to say that non-experiential orientation "has some impact but it doesn't have a convincing impact of: Ah ha, now I really know what you're talking about. Now I really understand."

Myth of individuality. Sarah repeatedly disparaged less holistic approaches to orientation, pointing out that orientation leaders "often...end up with a lot of intellectual stuff", based on the "myth of individuality," which is the belief that we go overseas as individuals and come back "fairly unimpacted by what is around...unaffected in a sense." She went on to say, "In fact, I'm quite sure that those orientations are worse than not having done any orientation.... I would much rather have someone go unprepared...because at least they arrive with all the confusion that allows them to get an inner decision making process in place...."

Concrete components. Sarah posited a hierarchy of learning in the orientation setting in which physical needs such as "what pair of boots to buy" or "what kind of food is available" form the base and more ephemeral concepts related to identity and cultural adjustment form the top. "...If those [concrete issues] aren't addressed, then you sabotage the whole orientation." The challenge to the orientation leader then becomes "how to get those [concrete issues] in there without taking over the agenda." Yet, she stressed, "when push comes to shove, it is not how to ride from this side of the border to the next.

We can figure that out. But we have a hard time figuring the other stuff out, the stuff that's impacting us."

The need for reorientation. Sarah pointed out that the process of the sojourn begins "sometime before you decided to sign up and it ends some nebulous place in the future, as yet to be defined." She stressed the necessity of reorientation training, pointing out that "reorientation can be a lot more brutal than the going over." Returnees often get "about a week of glory" and then are expected and expect themselves to instantly readjust. In fact, she considers a reorientation program "a privilege and a right."

Realistic expectations. Sarah pointed out the need for orientation programs to create realistic expectations for sojourners, given that "upwards of 90% of the people come back feeling like they've failed." Speaking as an orientation leader as to participants, she said, "...all we can do is give you a road map. What...the bumps on the road actually look like I have no idea."

Institutional agenda. Sarah threw out a challenge to institutions which offer overseas opportunities to "balance their task oriented institution and this very personal experience they're sending this student on." Warning against a lack of administrative support, she observed that returnees "may be incapable of going to classes when they come back...Is there some kind of counseling in place for that person?.... Is there some kind of format for ongoing student contact?" She concluded, "People send people overseas for all sorts of reasons. How true are we administratively to the goals that we set for the participants? If we say this is a big learning experience, then how do we value all the aspects of the learning experience?"

Interview #2

Culture shock. Becky specified that the following topics related to culture shock should be addressed in predeparture orientation:

> an awareness of what culture shock is...what those things [are] that you might be facing, how to prevent them as well as...how to [number] one, recognize them in oneself and in others, and...strategies for coping with them.

She felt that presenting theories about culture shock "doesn't hurt" but that participants who are interested in a less theoretical approach may prefer to hear personal stories and coping strategies. She stated,

> ...They're not going to be going into an experience where they're always dealing with it intellectually. That's not the stuff that's probably going to be most challenging. It's going to be all the others things that are more challenging.

Experiential components. Becky called herself a "strong proponent of experiential education" and spoke at length about two activities which were effective in "taking a look at some of the cultural norms we have and sort of pushing the limits on some of those." "I think doing something experientially is essential", she said. She advocated "any kind of experiential activity, because it touches so much of the whole person and not just the intellectual." She summarized, "If they [the sojourners] know how stressed they get out, it gives them a little bit more of an understanding of themselves, but those are all parts of themselves that are all going to be really taxed when they enter into another culture."

Value/role of debriefing. Becky made it clear that proper debriefing was an essential part of the experiential equation. She said that experiential education "becomes really rich learning ground... because then you have all those areas to debrief from." During debriefing as she explained it, participants are encouraged to describe the situation, identify the assumptions behind the descriptions, talk about feelings they have about the experience, and plan for similar experiences should they arise in the future.

Area- and culture-specific information. Becky talked about "an understanding of culture aspects, country aspects of wherever [the sojourners are] going." She mentioned that in her programs, generalities about the host culture are communicated "right at the beginning" in order to give participants "a kind of framework" within which to understand the host culture including history, politics, and geography. She felt participants should learn about "day to day realities" such as typical meal times and menus, "any cultural customs or mores or norms that they'd have to respect", and "what kind of dress is appropriate."

Stereotyping. Becky advocated activities heightening awareness of stereotyping and helping participants recognize some of the culture-bound assumptions they make (and of which they may be unaware), "be hopefully more open-minded when they're walking into [the new culture]...," and be "more open to not making assumptions about another culture."

Preparation. Becky admitted that it was "impossible to completely prep somebody, but...somebody who's really ready will have as much [preparation] as possible." She advocated advance individual preparation in addition to an

orientation meeting, provided that the participants could clearly see the value of the individual tasks. She said,

> ...it's going to make your experience better the more work you've done beforehand... [some] probably coast through the program but they don't get as much out of it as somebody who's done more, looked into it more.

How people access information. This woman was quick to point out that not all participants access information in the same way and that presentation of information must vary accordingly. She observed that people who have been through a more formalized education system might respond more positively to a strongly theoretical presentation, whereas young people might "rather hear stories or someone else's experience to give them insight into what they might be going through."

Safety. Becky raised the issue of safety as one to which she has given considerable thought. She highlighted sexual harassment as a concern, particularly for women, and talked about finding the boundary between personal integrity ("I will not be hit") and cultural sensitivity. She also advocated training participants to deliberately cultivate a support network abroad so that there is always someone to turn to should an unsafe situation arise. She concluded, "...those whole issues of personal integrity and cultural sensitivity and where the boundary is on that, I think people should think about that."

Understanding themselves. Introspection and an understanding of one's own expectations and fears were also important to Becky. "If they [the participants] know how stressed out they get," she suggested, " it gives them a

little bit more of an understanding of themselves." Sojourners should also determine what they expect of themselves and of the host country, she said, or they will not get as much out of their time abroad as they could. She acknowledged that some people fear becoming too structured but she felt that "the clearer you are in your own [mind]...in your own objectives and expectations... the clearer you can be when you get there."

Information about Canada/community. Including information about Canada as part of the orientation received the following comments: "I certainly bring it up and say, be able to [answer questions about Canada], you know. Now, I leave it up to people to decide how much they want to be able to do." Becky mentioned the importance of learning about Canada and one's own community as a way of preparing not only for the sojourn but for one's eventual return home.

Summary of Interview Data

Becky and Sarah had similar ideas about those topics which were most important to them. Both of them stressed the emotional challenges posed by the abroad experience and felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training, suggesting that an orientation would be incomplete without an activity which takes the trainee out of his or her cultural comfort zone. The women differed only by degree on the issue of concrete information and day to day realities of life abroad; Sarah felt those components were basic necessities in the orientation process but should never dominate over personal confrontation activities, where Becky spoke in favor of presenting culture and

country aspects as one of the first tasks of the orientation. Both felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad.

The women differed on topics which were not as important to them. Becky stressed personal safety, group preparation, and the importance of learning about Canada and one's community before going abroad. She emphasized the need to consider different ways trainees access information and felt that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience. Sarah challenged institutions which send student overseas to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants. She stressed the difficulty of returning home and declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Questionnaire

Methodology and Data Analyses

To determine what past participants of study abroad perceived to be important components in predeparture orientation and how important they considered those components to be, a survey questionnaire was mailed to 130 past participants of the University of Alberta's academic exchange program for the years 1990-95 inclusive. Forty-two of those 130 respondents proved to be unreachable by mail, bringing the sample size to 88; of those, 65% mailed in completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire was developed from predeparture orientation components compiled from the literature and from focus group and interview data collected as part of this study. The questionnaire was divided into several sections pertaining to demographic data; participants' experiences with preparation; practical arrangements; academic life abroad; self-awareness;

adjustment and readjustment; national, institutional, or regional components, cultural components; resources; the purpose of study abroad; and other information the respondents wished to provide. Open-ended questions were used at the beginning and end of the questionnaire; in the middle sections, respondents were asked to *rate* items on a four-point scale, *rank* them within each section, or both.

Data from the closed-form questions were analyzed using SPSSX for Macintosh using descriptive statistics. The 90 items from the practical; academic; self-awareness; adjustment and readjustment; national, institutional, and regional; and cultural sections were compared in an aggregate list by rating. Open-ended questions were analyzed using open coding procedures. Responses were categorized into broad themes which emerged from the data.

The results should be interpreted carefully. Respondents were not asked how important it was to include the issues *in predeparture orientation* but rather how important it was to know something about the issues before studying abroad. The latter question asks what gaps respondents feel exist between students' knowledge and the knowledge they should have before they leave. The former, which guided the survey, asks what knowledge students should have before they leave. In other words, the responses define the desired outcome of preparation related to these issues. Measuring the gap between students' knowledge and the desired outcomes is a step in the curriculum planning process which will need to be addressed outside the scope of the study.

A further consideration is the difficulty some participants may have in recalling in what ways they were well prepared before they studied abroad. In answering the questions, participants are asked to record not only what they

themselves had to do or learn in preparation but also what they inherently or through experience already knew or had done. Some of these factors may be out of consciousness. Ask an experienced driver, for instance, what is important to know before driving a car. He or she may comment on the importance of knowing the gas from the brake pedal but is not likely to point out the importance of not stepping on both at the same time. It is hoped, however, that when presented with such an item on a questionnaire, an experienced driver would recognize that this otherwise out of consciousness principle nevertheless would be important for first-time drivers to know.

The open-ended questions were designed in part to access people's emotional experiences with preparing to study abroad. Asking about people's successes or regrets can be a powerful way to tap into their deepest struggles. For the purposes of this study, the identification of regrets served two functions. First, it allowed respondents a cathartic opportunity to air any nagging frustrations over details which proved disastrous to their study abroad experience. Second, it allowed for the identification of gaps between participants' level of preparedness and their actual experiences, that is, between what they knew and what they needed to know. This identification of gaps is a key step in assessing the importance of curricular components.

The following section of this chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire data. It should be noted that figures may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Quantitative Data

Demographic data. Demographic data were collected about the participants. Table 2 indicates the frequency and valid percent of respondents in

Table 2

Information About Respondents

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	35	61
Male	22	39
Age at start		
17 - 24	55	97
25 or older	2	4
U of A Faculty		
Business	24	42
Arts	19	33
Science	9	16
Ag/ For/Home Ec.[a]	2	4
Physical Ed. & Rec.[b]	1	2
Law	1	2
Education	1	2
Student Status		
Undergraduate	57	100

(table continues)

Variable	N	%
Host country		
U.K.	22	39
Sweden	12	21
Australia	7	13
Mexico	5	9
Austria	4	7
Korea	2	4
Japan	2	4
U.S.A.	2	4
No. of months		
9 or more	38	67
less than 9 months	19	33
Attended orientation[c]	43	75

Note. Figures may not equal 100% due to rounding. Questions refer to the study abroad experience (e.g., student's age at start of study abroad experience).
[a]Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics
[b]Physical Education and Recreation
[c]Predeparture orientation for study abroad

each of the demographic categories. Two-third of respondents were female (67%). The majority of respondents (97%) were between 17 and 24 years old when they began their study abroad experience, the traditional age for postsecondary students. Most respondents were registered in the Faculty of Business (42%) or Arts (33%) at the University of Alberta while studying

abroad. Six other Faculties were represented, each with less than 20%. Each respondent studied abroad as an undergraduate.

Data were also collected about the parameters of the exchange (see Table 2). Respondents were asked to refer to their first exchange with the home institution in question, recognizing that respondents may have studied abroad more than once. Nearly 40% reported having studied in the U.K. while approximately one-fifth reported study in Sweden (21%). Smaller numbers reported study in Australia (13%), Mexico (9%), Austria (7%), Korea (4%), Japan (4%), and the United States (4%). Overall, the majority of students reported experiences in English speaking countries (56%). The length of time studied abroad varied from 3.5 to 12 months but the average was a full academic year, or 10 months. Sixty-six percent studied abroad for 9 months or more. Most (75%) attended an orientation session before they left to study abroad, although it was not clear whether the session was offered by the University of Alberta or by another agency.

In order to reduce the volume of data presented in this chapter, findings for the next six questions on the survey, Questions 11 through 16, are presented in Appendix K in table form by question. These findings are also presented in aggregate form in the section which follows (Table 3). When analyzing the data, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the *rating* scores and the *ranking* scores as outlined below:

rating	ranking
don't know	most important
not important/helpful	2nd most important
somewhat important/helpful	3rd most important
very important/helpful	

Each item was *rated* on the four point scale but was also assigned a *weighted rank* in a follow up question at the end of that question. Weighted rank for each item was calculated as the mean of the following weightings for each response to the ranking questions: most important (1.0), 2nd most important (2.0), 3rd most important (3.0). The lower the mean, the higher the rank of the item is taken to be.

Rating frequencies and percentages are reported in the tables for responses of somewhat important/helpful and very important/helpful. In order to consider the components from a single variable perspective, a weighted rating was calculated as follows: responses (%) for each item were multiplied by factors of 5 (somewhat important) and 10 (very important) and summed. For example, the weighted rating for housing (19% somewhat important, 81% very important) would be (.19x5)+(.81x10)=9.050. Factors 5 and 10 were randomly chosen to make clearer the distinction between items with similar scores. Unless otherwise noted, items are arranged in the tables in order of weighted rating.

Aggregate list of components by rating. In order to summarize and clarify the results of Questions 11 through 16 (see Appendix K for findings for each question), Table 3 was compiled. Items in Table 3 are ordered by weighted rating. While it is useful to examine the rating components received by its question of the instrument (see Appendix K for percentage breakdowns), it is also vital to consider the components from a single variable perspective.

Table 3

Aggregate List of Components of Preparation for Study Abroad by Weighted Rating (Questions 11-16)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
1	Academic	Getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	9.300
2	Culture/HC	How to dress appropriately for culture and climate in HC	9.295
3	Practical	Financial matters	9.200
4	Practical	Housing	9.050
5	Practical	Travel documents	9.000
6	Academic	Host university administrative procedures	8.700
7	Culture/HC	Physical safety in HC	8.685
8	Academic	Home university administrative procedures	8.500
9	NationalHC	Religious and racial tolerance in HC	8.425
10	NationalHC	Climate in HC	8.335
11	Self-Awareness	Personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	8.220
12	Adjustment	How to cope with adjusting to a new culture	8.200
13	Adjustment	Other peoples' experiences adjusting to a new culture	8.150
14	Self-Awareness	Personal concerns about going abroad	8.095
15	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward authority, class and status in HC	8.035
16	NationalHC	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.) in HC	7.895

(table continues)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
17	Culture/HC	Nonverbal communication in HC	7.855
18	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward work and study in HC	7.855
19	Adjustment	What it is like to adjust to a new culture	7.850
20	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward sex and dating in HC	7.810
21	Culture/HC	Customs, rituals and superstitions in HC	7.630
22	Self-Awareness	Interaction with new people while abroad	7.545
23	NationalHC	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities in HC	7.505
24	Adjustment	How to apply experience after it's over	7.500
25	National/C	Current topics of national or regional interest in Canada	7.495
26	NationalHC	Gender issues in HC	7.460
27	Self-Awareness	Personal reactions to positive and negative stress	7.415
28	Culture/HC	Attitudes toward personal relationships in HC	7.415
29	Adjustment	Adjustment to life after study abroad	7.300
30	Practical	Health concerns	7.250
31	NationalHC	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment) in HC	7.190
32	Culture/HC	Stereotypes in HC	7.190
33	Culture/HC	Value of the individual vs. the group in HC	7.175

(table continues)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
34	Practical	What to pack	7.150
35	Practical	Insurance	7.150
36	NationalHC	Current topics of national or regional interest in HC	7.050
37	NationalHC	Human rights issues in HC	7.050
38	National/C	Geography in Canada	7.020
39	Culture/HC	Personal hygiene issues in HC	7.015
40	Culture/C	Stereotypes in Canada	6.960
41	Culture/HC	Outlets for personal interests (hobbies, sports) in HC	6.930
42	Academic	Selecting courses	6.900
43	NationalHC	Geography in HC	6.670
44	National/C	Political structures in Canada	6.670
45	NationalHC	History of international conflict in HC	6.630
46	Practical	Extracurricular travel abroad	6.600
47	National/C	Religious and racial tolerance in Canada	6.585
48	Culture/HC	Food in HC	6.585
49	National/C	Human rights issues in Canada	6.520
50	National/C	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators) in Canada	6.485
51	National/C	History of international conflict in Canada	6.405

(table continues)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
52	NationalHC	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators) in HC	6.225
53	Culture/C	Attitudes toward work and study in Canada	6.160
54	Culture/C	Attitudes toward sex and dating in Canada	6.140
55	Culture/HC	Religion(s) in HC	6.140
56	National/C	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities in Canada	6.075
57	NationalHC	Political structures in HC	5.985
58	Self-Awareness	Personal strengths and weaknesses	5.860
59	Academic	Guidance concerning academic program while abroad	5.850
60	National/C	Environmental issues in Canada	5.815
61	Culture/C	Attitudes toward personal relationships in Canada	5.805
62	NationalHC	Environmental issues in HC	5.725
63	National/C	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.) in Canada	5.720
64	Culture/C	Nonverbal communication in Canada	5.720
65	National/C	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.) in Canada	5.715
66	NationalHC	Literacy and basic education in HC	5.700
67	Culture/C	Customs, rituals and superstitions in Canada	5.635
68	National/C	Gender issues in Canada	5.620

(table continues)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
69	National/C	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.) in Canada	5.610
70	Self-Awareness	Communication with friends and family while abroad	5.540
71	Culture/C	Attitudes toward authority, class and status in Canada	5.535
72	Culture/HC	Business practices in HC	5.351
73	Culture/C	Value of the individual vs. the group in Canada	5.275
74	NationalHC	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.) in HC	5.260
75	National/C	Literacy and basic education in Canada	5.176
76	National/C	Arts and literature in Canada	5.000
77	Academic	Study patterns and teaching methods	5.000
78	National/C	Climate in Canada	4.915
79	Culture/C	Business practices in Canada	4.905
80	Practical	Work abroad opportunities	4.900
81	Practical	Telephone systems	4.550
82	NationalHC	Arts and literature in HC	4.375
83	National/C	University of Alberta's goals to become more international	4.265
84	Practical	Local transportation	4.250
85	Culture/C	Food in Canada	4.210

(table continues)

Rating[a]	Theme	Variable	Weighted Rating
86	Culture/C	Religion(s) in Canada	4.210
87	Adjustment	Theories about adjusting to a new culture	3.900
88	National/C	University of Alberta's teaching and research goals	3.555
89	National/C	The province's foreign trade initiatives	2.930
90	National/C	The province's goals for human resource development	2.455

Note. HC=host country. C=Canada. Themes identify items from questionnaire questions as follows: Practical (Q. 11); Academic (Q. 12); Self-Awareness (Q. 13); Adjustment (Q. 14); NationalHC and National/C (Q. 15); and Culture/HC and Culture/C (Q. 16). See Appendix K for findings by question.

[a]By weighted rating

Several observations can be made about the data presented in Table 3. Most of the ten highest rated components of preparing to study abroad are predictably pragmatic: (1st) getting home university credit for courses taken abroad, (2nd) how to dress appropriately for culture and climate in host country, (3rd) financial matters, (4th) housing, (5th) travel documents, (6th) host university administrative procedures, (7th) physical safety in host country, (8th) home university administrative procedures, and (9th) climate in the host country. These findings are in keeping with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy and Grove's (1989) concentric circles of sojourner needs; until they are met, the immediate or survival concerns are the most important from the perspective of the individuals "in need." Respondents clearly indicated that the most important components for them in preparing to study abroad are pragmatic.

Intuitively, most of the items in the top ten make sense, insofar as one would expect credit transfer, finances, housing, and administrative hurdles,

which are all immediate sorts of concerns, to be of primary interest to people preparing to study abroad. However, religious and racial tolerance in the host country, which also rated in the top ten, is an anomaly, particularly as the majority of respondents did not study in a country where one would expect an unusual amount of religious or racial intolerance. The high rating of this item seems to reflect more of an interest in social justice than in personal preparation.

After the above pragmatic concerns, respondents indicate the importance of a cluster of self-awareness and adjustment items, including personal expectations and concerns (hopes and fears), how to cope with adjusting to a new culture, and other people's experiences adjusting to a new culture (11th through 14th). It is perhaps surprising that such ephemeral concerns would rate so highly with participants, but these items do appear in numerous practitioner materials and are the topic of much discussion in the literature.

Attitudes toward sex and dating in the host country also ranked surprisingly high at 20th, given that it is normally not even mentioned in the cross-cultural training literature. Respondents were either glad they knew or wished they had known about sex and dating practices abroad, and they would advocate other students knowing about it before they go abroad in the future.

Physical safety in the host country was among the top ten most important items overall, yet health concerns lagged behind in 30th place. It would seem that safety is a more important or immediate concern for respondents than health. This is notable in that many orientation programs

address health and safety as a single issue, without recognizing that for participants, health concerns may not be as immediate or "real" as are safety issues. This may affect students' ability to process health-related information in an orientation, if instrumental value is a factor in students' attention and retention.

Interestingly enough, four of the lowest rated components of study abroad preparation were those relating to the University's or the province's goals and interests. These items include the province's goals for human resource development, the province's foreign trade initiatives, the University of Alberta's teaching and research goals, and the University of Alberta's goals to become more international. This is a strong vote of disinterest from respondents in knowing about these key institutional and regional agendas before preparing to study abroad.

Despite valiant attempts by many a music teacher, I am sure, arts and literature in the host country are rated quite unimportant. Religion(s) in Canada is considered even less important for preparation, which is surprising given the current interest in North America in spirituality and alternate realities (TV's "X-Files" and "Touched by an Angel" come to mind). Also low were local transportation, about which students can presumably learn once they arrive; theories about adjusting, which students decline over the possibility of hearing other people's experiences; and food and climate in Canada, which apparently respondents did not find relevant to their time abroad or which they found too self-evident to mention.

Other surprises were business practices in Canada and business practices in the host country. Given that 42% of respondents were registered in the Faculty of Business while they were on exchange, it seems strange that

business practices' ratings placed them in the bottom 1/5 of the components listed in the survey. Perhaps, again, the similarity in cultures between Canada and the host countries of the majority of respondents accounts for this apparent lack of interest.

Taken by thematic section, these data indicate some interesting trends. Items related to academic life abroad were rated high overall (3 in the top 7), with getting home university credit for courses taken abroad rating highest of all the components. Ranked and rated least important by far were selecting courses, guidance concerning academic program while abroad, and study patterns and teaching methods. The former finding is surprising given that changes to courses once the student is abroad are a frequent source of stress for study abroad advisors at the institution where the study was conducted. The low ranking of study patterns and teaching method in the host country may perhaps be explained by the relative similarity of teaching methods in the host countries of respondents to those in Canada. Alternately, it is possible that the subtle differences between academic systems were not noticed by respondents during their one or two term sojourn.

Adjustment and readjustment items were clustered high in the ratings, with 5 items in the top 30 and only theories about adjusting to a new culture lagging behind at 87th. How to cope with adjusting and other people's experiences adjusting to a new culture rated highest of the adjustment issues. By far the lowest rated adjustment item was theories about adjusting to a new culture. Apparently past participants would rather hear personal stories about adjustment than listen to theories.

National, institutional or regional items were spread throughout the ratings, with items related to the host country rating generally much higher

than items about Canada. With respect to Canada, respondents thought it most important to know something about current topics (25th), geography (38th), political structures (44th), religious and racial tolerance (47th), and human rights (49th). The first three are "cocktail party" items which might come in handy in conversation with host nationals--an altogether pragmatic consideration. The other two reflect more of a concern for social issues, echoing the high overall importance accorded religious and racial tolerance in the host country. Speaking of social issues, it is interesting that the environment, which is very much *en vogue* with young people in Canada today, received a significantly lower rating than religious and racial tolerance. Further examination of generational studies with Canadian young people and the effect of mass media on socialization might shed light on these findings. Of the five most important national concerns regarding the host country, climate (10th) and civil laws (16th) qualify as pragmatic or instrumental interests, but religious and racial tolerance (9th), treatment of minorities (23rd), and gender issues (26th) speak of larger social interests on the part of respondents. In addition, the national components regarding the host country most often cited in the literature are not most important to respondents. These include geography, current topics, and political structures.

Cultural items appeared throughout the list; cultural items dealing with the host country were mostly in the top half of the list, while items about Canada were mostly in the bottom half. The most important cultural item regarding Canada was stereotypes. This is notable as stereotypes in the host country were rated far lower (9th of cultural issues in the host country); respondents were concerned with how they were perceived by host nationals more than how they perceived their hosts. Other highly important cultural

issues in Canada included attitudes toward work and study and towards sex and dating. The former is advocated in the literature but rarely addressed in orientation materials; the latter is virtually never mentioned. Rated highest in the host country were appropriate dress, physical safety, and attitudes toward authority and status. The three lowest rated cultural items are the same regarding Canada and the host country: business practices, religion(s), and food (see discussion above).

Overall, self-awareness items were rated as moderately important, being strewn throughout the aggregate list with none in the top 10 or bottom 20 items. The most important self-awareness items were expectations and objectives, concerns, and interaction with new people, which is often both an expectation and a concern for preparing sojourners. Perhaps the old standby orientation session addressing "fears and expectations" has some grounding in what participants think is important.

Practical items were clustered in the findings, with 3 in the top 5 rated items, 4 in the middle, and 3 in the bottom 11. While some practical components were seen as particularly important, others such as what to pack, health concerns and food in the host country received only moderate endorsement. In fact, knowing about human rights issues in the host country rated higher than knowing about food in the host country. Of course, the similarities between food in Canada and in the host countries of the majority of respondents (73% went to the Sweden, the U.K., or Australia) may account in part for that result. Students might feel less need to know about cultural items in the host country in general if in their experience they perceive few radical differences between Canadian culture and their host culture.

A further explanation for the low rating of food in the host country and other items is that participants may already have been familiar with it and so did not think of it as important to know something about. In other words, their familiarity may have clouded their ability to answer the question objectively. This limitation is an inevitable corollary to asking the question, "What do you think is important in preparing to study abroad?" To a certain extent, people will answer with what they wish they had known and underrepresent what they already know (and thereby take for granted).

The following sections report the findings for the final two closed-response questions in the questionnaire.

Helpfulness of resources. Data from the literature and from the focus group and interviews conducted in this study suggest that it is important not only what students learn in predeparture orientation, but also how they learn. In question 17 (see Table 4), respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of each of 14 possible resources for predeparture orientation and then to rank the items according to most important, 2nd most important, and 3rd most important. Weighted *rank* for each item was calculated as the mean of the following weightings for each response to the ranking questions: most important (1.0), 2nd most important (2.0), 3rd most important (3.0). The lower the mean, the higher the rank of the item is taken to be. In order to consider the components from a single variable perspective, a weighted *rating* was also calculated as follows: responses (%) for each item were multiplied by factors of 5 (somewhat important) and 10 (very important) and summed.

Respondents rated people who have studied abroad at the host university, i.e., past study abroad participants, as the most helpful resource in preparing to study overseas. People from the host university and written

Table 4

Reported Helpfulness of Resources by Weighted Rating (Question 17)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%		
1	People who have studied abroad at the host university	7	13	47	87	4	9.35
2	People from the host university	11	20	44	80	7	9.00
3	Written materials about the host university	20	35	37	65	2	8.25
4	Other students going to the same university of country	17	32	34	64	3	8.00
5	Written materials about the host country or region	24	42	33	58	1	7.90
6	People who have visited the host country or region	23	43	31	57	6	7.85
7	Predeparture orientation meetings	20	42	27	56	5	7.70
8	Videos about the host university	26	54	18	38	8	6.50
9	Videos about the host country or region	34	68	13	26	9	6.00
10	Language instructors	13	36	14	39	11	5.70
11	Written materials about travel in general	38	69	9	16	10	5.05
12	Cultural simulation activities	25	60	5	12	12	4.20
13	Language tapes	16	47	4	12	14	3.55
14	Videos about travel in general	29	59	2	4	13	3.35

[a]By weighted rating

[b]By weighted rank

materials about the host university placed second and third. Cultural simulation activities, language tapes, and videos about travel in general were

ranked least helpful. Noteworthy in fourth place is other students going to the same university of country, which is an often underutilized tool for learning. In fact, almost no mention is made of fellow sojourners as a resource in the orientation literature, except for the value of group process training for groups going abroad together. Fellow sojourners can serve as a support network in preparation and abroad.

It should be noted that not all respondents were necessarily familiar with all of the resources listed in the instrument. For example, cultural simulation activities were offered at some predeparture orientations over the past five years but not at all of them, and only 75% of respondents had attended predeparture meetings. In addition, a student may have recalled an activity from a predeparture meeting or elsewhere but not have identified it as a cultural simulation activity. Even if participants did participate in such an activity, it may not have been effectively facilitated, thereby doing injustice to the resource. This issue of familiarity with the items is a limitation throughout the questionnaire but is particularly pronounced in the resources question.

Philosophy of study abroad. Although the research questions for this study focus on the content of study abroad orientation, it is important to consider how study abroad participants view the purpose or philosophy of study abroad, just as the university's philosophy related to internationalization was examined in the first chapter of this thesis. To discover that students do or do not agree with the institution's reasons for sending them abroad has implications for the way programs are marketed, participants selected, and departing sojourners trained. Accordingly, in Question 18, respondents were asked to rank 11 statements about the philosophy of study abroad with 1 being

the most important and 11 the least important (see Table 5). Mean scores were used to rank the statements, where the lowest mean (i.e., closest to 1) indicated the strongest endorsement. Responses were drawn from University of Alberta documents, literature around paradigms or models of internationalization, and International Centre staff (student-centered goals).

Table 5

Reported Importance of Statements About Study Abroad

Rank[a]	Study abroad should:	Mean
1	allow students to pursue their personal goals.	3.036
2	prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society.	3.393
3	promote global cooperation and understanding.	3.407
4	allow students to pursue their academic goals.	4.873
5	promote world peace through personal friendships.	5.717
6	enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace.	5.981
7	allow students to pursue their professional goals.	6.151
8	give students tools to work for social justice.	7.135
9	enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world.	7.294
10	help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries.	8.460
11	enhance the University's reputation abroad.	8.750

[a]By mean score

Respondents clearly indicated that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals (3.036), prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society (3.393), and promote

global cooperation and understanding (3.407). Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to identify groupings of statements according to individual responses. However, the following paragraph compares rankings of responses by grouping them by philosophy or paradigm.

Those statements about study abroad which were adapted from University of Alberta documents (study abroad should enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world and enhance the university's reputation abroad) received two of the lowest rankings (ninth and eleventh of eleven respectively). Participants apparently did not agree with the University about what was important for study abroad. Similarly, statements which most accurately reflected the transformative model/paradigm as outlined by Toh (1993) and by Warner (1993) (study abroad should give students tools to work for social justice and help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries) received low rankings (eighth and tenth of eleven respectively). Judging by these responses, participants apparently did not/do not endorse the social justice model or paradigm. With both liberal statements in the top five, the closest thing to a thematic consensus among participants is that the liberal paradigm or model--pursuing goodwill and mutual understanding around the world--reflects what is important for study abroad.

Open-Ended Questions

The first and last sections of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions which were strategically placed to give participants a chance to refresh their memories about their study abroad experience as well as bring closure to the questionnaire completion exercise. Question 20, the

penultimate question, asked respondents to identify the one most important part of preparing to study abroad. The very last question, Question 21, solicited comments about the questionnaire itself; findings are not included in the text as they do not pertain to the topic of the study (see Appendix J for these comments).

During analysis, I wrote the responses on paper and then grouped similar responses until broad themes emerged. The themes from the literature were also considered (see chapter two). Responses to some questions fell into the same themes as were used in constructing the questionnaire (practical, academic, and so forth) while others did not. The following section presents the responses to each of the open-ended questions by theme. Emphasis is placed on what was said rather than who said it.

Most helpful thing in preparing to study abroad. The results of the first open-ended question, Question 7, were varied but predictable. The conceptual correlation between responses to this first question and the items which were identified in the creation of the survey serves as a validation of those pre-identified items.

Responses ranged from getting an immigration visa to learning the language, but most referred to items which were included in the closed questions of the survey. A number of participants identified a personal connection to people who had been to or were from the host country or university as one of the most helpful things they did or learned in preparing to study abroad. Some respondents also noted that attending the International Centre's predeparture orientation was one of the most helpful things they did to prepare. A few students mentioned how helpful it had been to find out

historical or cultural information about the host country. Academic topics included arranging for credit transfer and gathering information about the host university prior to departure. Practical arrangements found most helpful were housing, transportation from the airport, transportation in general, the cost of living, an immigration visa, and packing only the essentials. In terms of their own self-awareness, a few respondents indicated that being prepared for homesickness and being prepared to make the exchange "an incredible experience" were most helpful for them.

Two responses to this first question had not been included in the closed-response sections of the survey. One respondent stated that previous experience studying abroad had been one of the most helpful preparatory activities. Yet another indicated that establishing contacts in the host country was one of the most helpful things for him.

Wish had learned or done in preparing to study abroad. The second open-ended question, Question 8, asked respondents what they wish they had learned or done in preparing to study abroad. This question served as a corollary to the first and, more importantly, was designed to access regrets I have heard expressed repeatedly by sojourners. Again, regrets can be a powerful tool for identifying and working around potential problem areas for students while they are abroad.

As with the first question, the majority of responses reflected items which were already included in the survey. Comments included academic concerns such as information about the host university and receiving credit for coursework done overseas. Practical concerns included housing, finances, packing, and paperwork in general. Several respondents wished they had

communicated with past exchange participants, students currently on exchange from the host university, or fellow exchange students going to the same university or country (or just other people embarking on a similar experience). One respondent wished to have learned or done more before departure about communicating with friends and family. Another felt it would have been wise to learn more about the host country before studying abroad.

A few novel items were introduced in the respondents' wish lists. Travel arrangements to the host country and university were a concern which was not specifically addressed in the closed questions. Two people would have liked to prepare themselves better through cross-cultural training and a computer course respectively.

Most helpful part of orientation. Respondents were directed to answer Question 9a only if they had participated in an orientation session before they left to study abroad. The question did not specify that the orientation session be one offered by the home institution. The sessions offered at the University of Alberta have varied so greatly over the years that each respondent's experience of the sessions can be interpreted as unique. What matters is not what was offered at the orientation, but rather, what was so memorable, helpful, or otherwise significant to the participant that they would later recall it as the most helpful part of the session for them.

There was strong endorsement for personal communication with past participants, fellow exchange students, and students currently at the home institution on exchange. Practical arrangements also received frequent mention, in particular money matters, health care, packing, and a checklist of

things to do before leaving. A few students found the cultural adjustment cycle the most helpful part of the orientation. Some highlighted the academic information which was presented. Voicing fears was helpful for some, while communication games ranked highest with others. A few indicated that nothing in the orientation was particularly helpful, indeed, that the orientation as a whole was not helpful.

Missing from orientation. Question 9b asked what participants wish had been included in the orientation. Respondents once again had an opportunity to identify regrets, that is, gaps between their own preparedness and their experience with studying abroad. The assumption is, again, that students' frustrations with their ability to function in the task for which they have been prepared are key clues to the ways the preparation program can be changed for the better. This is particularly true if one of the goals of the preparation program is to decrease learner frustration with the task they are undertaking. This stress-reduction approach is seen widely throughout the literature of crossing cultures (Barna, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983).

Similar components were mentioned on the wish list as were lauded in the previous question, leaving one to wonder whether the information was actually missing from the orientations or whether the participants for whatever reason did not retain the information when it was presented. Interaction with fellow exchange students and with past participants was missed in the orientations. Several respondents wished there had been more attention to practical considerations such as housing, getting a work visa, and financial information. One respondent indicated she wished the orientation had been more practical in general. Academic concerns such as arranging for

credit transfer and obtaining information about the host university were mentioned by some. One respondent wished the orientation had dealt with transportation to the host country, while another brought up the adjustment of returning home as a topic to be covered in the orientation.

What else to include. This question allowed respondents to identify components of preparing for study abroad that had not already been mentioned in the survey. In addition, I expected that some people would refer to an item which did in fact appear in the survey, indicating either that respondents did not notice it or that they thought it was so important that it merited special mention. In either case, responses to this question provide another indication of items to which respondents attach importance.

Most suggestions were variations on themes previously touched on in the instrument. Practical issues ranged from contacting embassies overseas for jobs, searching for scholarships and bursaries to obtaining details of housing and full information on housing options. Academic matters included administrative paperwork, study patterns at the host university, finding out about courses and professors abroad, understanding marks and marks conversions, and obtaining approval for credit transfer in advance and in writing. On the topic of adjustment and self-awareness, respondents suggested making contacts with Canadians abroad before departing, talking with family before leaving, planning how to get Canadian news abroad, bringing a photo album for self and hosts, cultivating open-mindedness, and not going on the exchange if prone to home-sickness. In terms of national, institutional, or regional issues, a few participants advocated getting the "real scoop" on the host community before studying abroad. Others suggested getting as realistic a picture of the host university as possible. Potential

resources emphasized by respondents included more contact with past participants, students currently on exchange at the home institution, and fellow exchange students (particularly unstructured time in a social setting); and some contact from the home institution's exchange office during the sojourn.

Most important part of preparing to study abroad. Question 20, the penultimate question in the instrument, is perhaps the key question for the questionnaire; what do past participants believe is the most important part of preparing to study abroad? Responses varied greatly; it was not possible to

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Figure 2. Most important part of preparing to study abroad.

Practical Considerations
estimate financial costs, realistic budgeting
medical insurance
bank accounts
passport, visa
making money before you go
travel plans
housing

Academic Considerations
making a contact at the host university
arranging for credit transfer
information about the host university

Self-Awareness
having the right mindset, having an open mind
enthusiasm
personal preparation
preparing for a major change in lifestyle
knowing goals and expectations
knowing no one else is responsible for your happiness
having realistic expectations, having no expectations
knowing your limitations and hopes
knowing yourself
being prepared to learn as much as possible
saying good-bye to friends

(figure continues)

Adjustment
knowing about culture shock
getting ready for culture shock

National/Regional Considerations
history, religion, and current affairs of host country
language and culture of host country

Resources
past participants
students currently on exchange at the home institution
fellow exchange students
talking to people, voicing concerns
support from home institution's exchange office

Getting Organized
good planning
avoiding last minute stress
covering all possibilities
remaining calm
learning to relax

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identify one answer as definitive. Instead, components from nearly every section of the instrument were mentioned, along with a few which did not appear elsewhere in the survey or in responses to other questions. There were almost as many different ideas about what is most important as there were participants in the survey. These responses are presented in Figure 2 by thematic groupings which resulted from the open coding process and take into account the themes from the literature.

Summary of Questionnaire Data

In summary, respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program. Overall, components of

predeparture orientation which were rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, host university administrative procedures, physical safety, home university administrative procedures, religious and racial tolerance, and climate in the host country. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests. Resources *rating* most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university and people from the host university.

Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals; prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society; and promote global cooperation and understanding. Statements which speak to a liberal paradigm/model were the most heartily endorsed, with both statements ranking in the top five.

Responses to the open-ended questions validated the findings from the closed-response items. The question of what was the most important part of preparing to study abroad received a huge range of responses, most of which had been included in the closed-response items; however, a surprising result was that self-awareness issues, which had not received outstanding endorsement in the closed-response questions, were accorded the highest number of responses.

Summary

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution; address issues related to friends and family; learn more about the logistics of living abroad; go abroad with appropriate attitudes; learn from a person rather than a book; and access more specific, realistic information about the place they were going.

Interview participants felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training. The women felt day to day realities of life abroad were basic necessities in the orientation process, but not to the exclusion of personal confrontation activities. Both felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad. They also raised issues related to the different ways trainees access information and the belief that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience. They challenged institutions to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants and they declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program. Overall, components of predeparture orientation which were rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, and travel documents. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests. Resources *rating* most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university and people from the host university. Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals; prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society; and promote global cooperation and understanding. Self-awareness issues were accorded the highest number of responses to the open-ended questions.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, the significant findings from each data source are summarized, 12 common themes from across the data are discussed, and conclusions and implications of the findings are presented. In conclusion, recommendations for further research are identified.

Purpose of the Study

Study abroad is a powerful tool for serving student as well as institutional interests, yet without adequate student orientation prior to departure, the effectiveness of study abroad programming can be greatly affected (Tonkin & Edwards, 1981). Given the University of Alberta's commitment to expand and develop as an international university, and in light of its Education Abroad Program's expansion target of 2000 past participants by the year 2000, it is critical to determine what is important in preparing study abroad participants to fulfill their ambassadorial role and successfully achieve their goals abroad.

The purpose of this study was to examine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by academics and practitioners who are associated with international/intercultural education; in light of recent University of Alberta documents; and as perceived by University of Alberta students who are planning to study abroad and University of Alberta students who have already studied abroad.

A focus group, two interviews, and a questionnaire were used to collect data respectively from students preparing to study abroad, providers of orientation programs other than at the University of Alberta, and past

participants of a study abroad program. Data were gathered to determine the importance of components of predeparture orientation for study abroad as perceived by those three sources and to validate perceptions of importance as indicated in the literature and University of Alberta documents.

Findings By Source

Focus Group

Focus group participants felt it was very important to talk with people who had studied abroad at or were from the host country or institution. They felt it was important to address issues related to leaving and returning to friends and family. They wanted to learn more about the logistics of living abroad in terms of money matters and living arrangements. They wanted to go abroad with appropriate attitudes, they wanted to learn from a person rather than a book, and they wanted more specific, realistic information about the place they were going.

Interviews

The interview participants stressed the emotional challenges posed by the abroad experience and felt it vital that predeparture orientation address the personal and cultural adjustment needs of sojourners. Both women were strong advocates for an experiential approach to predeparture training. On the issue of concrete information and day to day realities of life abroad, the women felt those components were basic necessities in the orientation process but not to the exclusion of activities targeting personal awareness. Both respondents felt that trainees must understand themselves and have realistic expectations of what they will be able to accomplish abroad. Other

issues mentioned as important for sojourner preparation included personal safety and group preparation. Respondents also raised issues related to the planning of predeparture orientation, including the different ways trainees access information, the belief that the more prepared trainees will get the most out of their abroad experience, and a challenge to institutions to consider how true they are administratively to the goals which are set for participants. In addition, Sarah stressed the difficulty of returning home and declared reorientation for returnees a privilege and a right.

Questionnaire

Respondents to the questionnaire were predominantly female (67%), between 17 and 24 years old (97%), undergraduates (100%), and registered in Business (42%) or Arts (33%). Most studied abroad in the U.K. (39%) or Sweden (21%) for a full academic year (10 months on average) and attended a predeparture orientation program (75%).

Overall, components of predeparture orientation rated as most important were credit transfer, appropriate dress, financial matters, housing, and travel documents. Academic items rated highly, along with adjustment and readjustment items. Practical items with pragmatic appeal rated high but common sense or especially familiar items rated low. Self-awareness components were shown to be important. Respondents favored national items about Canada which one might expect to come up in casual conversation with host nationals, but their interests in terms of the host country showed a decided leaning toward social concerns. Rated lowest were institutional and provincial initiatives and interests.

Resources rating most helpful for preparing to study abroad were people who have studied abroad at the host university, people from the host university, and written materials about the host university.

Participants felt that study abroad should allow students to pursue their personal goals (ranked highest); prepare students to cope with economic, political, and social realities of an international society (ranked 2nd); and promote global cooperation and understanding (ranked 3rd). There was no consensus regarding a particular philosophical model or paradigm, although statements taken from University of Alberta documents ranked particularly low. Statements which speak to a liberal paradigm/model were the most heartily endorsed.

Responses to the open-ended questions validated the findings from the closed-response items and included items from each of the theme areas (practical arrangements, academic life abroad, and so forth). The question of what was the most important part of preparing to study abroad received a huge range of responses, most of which had been included in the closed-response items; however, a surprising result was that self-awareness issues, which had not received outstanding endorsement in the closed-response questions, were accorded the highest number of responses.

Issues Particular to Focus Group

The focus group data agree with the literature around sojourner expectations in identifying homesickness (family and friends [home]), housing (living arrangements), language, money, health, interaction with new people (social life abroad), and political unrest (safety) (Koester, 1985, 1987); course work (credit transfer), adjustment to new customs (culture and religion), and local transportation (practical cultural tips) (Martin and Rohrlich, 1991).

Concerns expressed by the focus group but not found in the literature include re-entry, appropriate attitudes, paperwork and work permits, student expectations, and race/class/gender issues abroad. Due to the scarcity of research into Canadian sojourner expectations, it is possible that these unexpected data can be attributed to the fact that the focus group members live in Canada and the survey subjects were U.S. residents. However, simpler and perhaps more accurate explanations may suffice: re-entry, paperwork and work permits were discussed at the previous orientation; I raised appropriate attitudes and student expectations as issues; and race/class/gender were perhaps more openly discussed on university campuses in 1995 than they were in 1985, 1987, or 1991, when the previous research was conducted. This does not disparage the validity of the focus group data.

The focus group data yields even more information which is not evident in the literature, namely, the importance of personal contacts in conveying information. Again, this may be a function of national culture, of shifts in popular culture in the past few years, or of the nature of the research. In any case, this phenomenon bears further investigation.

Three matters remain troubling. The first is the focus group participants' numerous references to not having known a particular piece of information. In one part of the discussion, one woman commented, "I had no idea about that. I was really surprised to hear that, because I've never heard that before... Because I had no idea that something like this could happen... I'm glad she told me." Often the comments were made in connection with information gained from a personal contact. The implication seems to be that if the student had not been told, he or she might never have found out and that would be unfortunate, tragic, or simply unthinkable. In this way, the group openly

acknowledged their need to be told certain information and their inability on their own to know some of what they need to know. This phenomenon underscores the importance of looking beyond the felt needs and interests of the participants when conducting research into predeparture orientation for study abroad, as is reflected in the research design of this study.

A second area of concern is the extent to which the way information is presented impacted on the focus group's perceptions of what is and is not beneficial in helping students prepare to study abroad. As noted above, the group acknowledged their need to be told certain information regarding their overseas experience. At the same time, information which did not somehow resonate with the students was discounted, as with the previous orientation's presentation on cultural adjustment. That part of the presentation was conducted by a member of the International Centre staff in lecture format using small-print overheads and scholarly terms. Yet the student who was told by an exchange student assorted facts such as the drinking age in the exchange country felt that that had been very helpful for her as she prepared to go abroad. Another interesting angle would be to look at the generational studies which have been conducted looking at current twentysomethings in regards to their attitudes toward friends and authority figures. One argument might be that young people today place a higher emphasis on friendship than did the previous generation and are therefore more likely to respond well to information which is communicated through a member of their cohort group than from an older expert (Bibby and Posterski, 1992).

A third and related question is to what extent the recent orientation affected the results of the focus group. This is a double-edged question. On one hand, I had serious doubts about how cognizant participants would have been

about their own needs and interests for predeparture orientation had they not participated in such an orientation only two weeks prior. The previous orientation primed the pump. However, it may also have determined some of the participants' attitudes towards certain topics in ways which a different orientation would not. Some issues which were not raised in the previous orientation were raised in the focus group, whereas other issues were not even mentioned in the focus group. Again, the question of significance arises. If a topic from the previous orientation was not mentioned, does that mean it was so well covered that the students took it as self evident, found it irrelevant, or simply forgot? Clearly, however, the data must be seen for what they are: students' expressions of what they believe to be important in preparing to study abroad at a certain point in time.

Discussion of Broad Themes

Introduction

In this section, 12 themes are presented and discussed which are evidenced in more than one data source to be important for predeparture orientation for study abroad. In random order, the themes are: practical components, academic concerns, other exchange participants, culture shock/adjustment, national or cultural issues, re-entry/readjustment, self-awareness, global perspective/social justice, preparation process, experiential approach, pragmatism, and institutional or regional interests.

Open-ended survey questions are treated as a single data source, as each response indicates in some way the importance of the component named.

Practical Components

The importance of practical components in predeparture orientation resonates repeatedly in findings from the interviews, focus group and

questionnaire. For the purposes of the study, practical considerations are those items related to everyday living which would not necessarily be classified primarily as academic, adjustment, self-awareness, national, regional, institutional, or cultural concerns.

The strongest support for including practical items in predeparture orientation is found in the questionnaire data. Certain practical items are rated high as can be seen in the aggregate listing of the questionnaire items (see Table 3 in the previous chapter). Financial matters, housing, and travel documents emerged as the third, fourth, and fifth highest rated components overall. Each of the open-ended questions generated a bevy of responses related to practical issues. Of the practical concerns indicated in the open-ended questions, financial matters were mentioned the most often and included such concerns as the cost of living abroad, scholarships and bursaries, budgeting, bank accounts abroad, and making money prior to departure.

The focus group and interview findings support the importance of practical considerations in predeparture orientation. Focus group participants clearly felt that items such as money matters and living arrangements were very important, going so far as to say they could not properly begin to prepare until some of those matters were resolved. Participants also mentioned health, paperwork, and work visas as being important for the preparation process. To one interviewee, the topic of safety was a core component of predeparture training. The other interviewee initially had little use for concrete orientation styles, such as training participants how to hire servants, but later in the interview concluded that practical matters had a place at the bottom of a hierarchy of orientation topics (see Brislin and Yoshida's [1994] application of Maslow [1954]; Grove's [1989] concentric circles of sojourner needs). According

to one interviewee, practical matters must be included, but their treatment must be followed by an experiential, ephemeral approach.

Some practical concerns, however, were not particularly well received by respondents. For example, local transportation abroad, telephone systems abroad, and work abroad opportunities were rated quite low overall on the survey. The less important components would seem to be those which the participants do not expect to cause difficulty if they remain unknown until arriving abroad, which may be readily dealt with upon arrival, or which are so entirely familiar as to not be worth mention.

Practical components, then, are perceived by providers, preparing students and past participants to be an important part of predeparture for orientation in general and as such should be factored into the curriculum planning process. These findings are consistent with the literature on cross-cultural training (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Koester, 1985, 1987; Martin and Rohrlich, 1991; and Summerfield, 1993), which also stresses the importance of practical matters. Special attention should be paid to practical components with pragmatic or instrumental value as perceived by participants.

Academic Concerns

In the literature and in the data from this study, academic concerns are high on the list of what people who are preparing to study abroad or have studied abroad think is important in predeparture preparation (Barnes, 1991; Summerfield, 1993). In the focus group and survey data, academic matters are consistently indicated to be among the most important concerns to address prior to study abroad. Academic issues did not come up in the interviews but this was expected as neither orientation provider (interviewee) works with a formal academic program.

In the overall rating of survey items, credit transfer (getting home university credit for courses taken abroad) topped the list. The importance of credit transfer issues was also strongly emphasized by members of the focus group. These findings are in keeping with Klineberg's (1981) contention that credit equivalencies can affect students' degree of satisfaction with their experience abroad and inhibit their function as cultural ambassadors. Host university administrative procedures followed credit transfer at fifth in the aggregate rating, while the home university administrative procedures item came in at eighth. Obtaining credit transfer, finding out about marks and marks conversions, and arranging for credit transfer in advance and in writing were mentioned several times in response to the open-ended survey questions. Also warranting frequent mention were contacts at the host university, information about courses and professors at the host university, and information about the host university in general. The home university received infrequent mention on such items as registering upon return and arranging academic contacts at the home university for purposes of communication while abroad.

Study patterns and teaching methods in the host country were not important to participants but were mentioned in the literature to be very important to students' ability to successfully complete academic pursuits abroad (Klineberg, 1981; Lieberman, 1994; Moore, 1987; Powell and Andersen, 1994).

Other Exchange Participants

One of the most prevalent themes in the data is the importance of communication with other exchange participants. This category includes people from the home institution who have studied abroad at the host institution (past participants), people who are currently studying abroad at the home institution from the host institution (current exchange students), and

other people from the home institution who are preparing to study abroad at the host institution (fellow exchange students); these three were rated the top resources by past participants.

Focus group participants were unanimous in their support for communication with other exchange participants as an important component of study abroad preparation; this topic was the only item to receive universal support. When addressing culture shock, one interviewee said that other people's experiences with culture shock were a key component in her presentation. Past participants and fellow exchange students would be prime candidates for the sharing of such experiences. Other exchange participants were mentioned in response to every open-ended question in the survey, including the question of what is most important in preparing to study abroad.

The interest in personal testimony can also be seen in the questionnaire rating of adjustment and readjustment items: The item theories about adjusting to a new culture was rated fourth least important overall of components in the survey, while other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture rated in the top 10. The data clearly show that contact with other exchange participants is perceived by providers, past participants and preparing participants to be one of the most important components of predeparture orientation for study abroad. This concurs with the literature related to interaction approach in cross-cultural training (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Pedersen, 1976; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991) and in numerous practitioner materials (Opper, Teichler, and Carlson, 1990; World Within Reach, 1995).

Cultural Shock/Adjustment

The data around culture shock and adjustment appear to be contradictory. Culture shock and adjustment are perceived by the interviewees and to a certain extent by questionnaire respondents as being very important, yet some adjustment issues fared poorly on the survey. Five of the six adjustment and readjustment items in the survey were rated in the top 30 overall; clearly, respondents feel adjustment is a significant issue. However, theories about adjusting to a new culture is one of the lowest rated items overall. Adjustment receives only honorable mention in the open-ended sections of the survey, with only one student indicating she found the cycle of adjustment to be the most helpful part of predeparture orientation. The focus group had little use for the topic.

Four observations will help explain this apparent contradiction. First, there is a problem in communicating with respondents about culture shock given that they have differing levels of experience with the subject. Second, the particular difficulty with culture shock as a topic is that it is highly experiential, yet not everyone who has experienced it would recognize their experience as such. Similarly, those with an intellectual grasp of the subject may lack a certain corporeal understanding unless they have experienced it firsthand. Third, the focus group participants had just been privy to a particularly theoretical presentation on culture shock in their orientation two weeks prior. One cannot blame them for finding the topic itself inaccessible when the presentation made it appear so. Fourth, the adjustment items which were most accessible to students rated highest of the six, while the most theoretical fell by the wayside.

This contradiction in the data is intriguing in that cross-cultural training literature and practitioner materials clearly endorse cultural adjustment training as sine qua non for sojourner preparation (Anderson, 1994; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kohls, 1984; Mead, 1994; Summerfield, 1993).

National or Cultural Issues

In general, respondents perceived knowing something about certain national or cultural issues to be important. Although national issues were treated separately from cultural issues in the survey, the distinction between them in the data is sufficiently blurred to warrant treating them as a unified theme. One interviewee felt it was important for sojourners to know something about day to day life, meals, food, history, politics, geography, and health issues in the host country, for example. The focus group members were eager to gather "practical cultural tips"; to know more about the culture of the host country; and to deal with issues of race, class, and gender. Specifically, focus group participants felt it important to know more specific information about the city and country than they had been able to access thus far.

In the survey, national or cultural issues rated high overall, particularly "cocktail party" items, meaning those topics such as dress, climate, and geography which might be likely to come up in casual conversation with host nationals. There was a noticeable interest in societal concerns such as religious and racial tolerance, treatment of minorities, and gender issues. The vast majority of highly rated national or cultural items pertain to the host country. Overall, national and cultural issues in the host country were of far greater interest to respondents than issues in Canada.

However, particular issues in those categories did not fare so well, such as food, religion(s), climate and arts and literature (all in Canada). Business practices in both Canada and the host country are rated particularly low as well. Perhaps respondents did not think it important to know something about these topics because they believed the topics to be self-evident or common knowledge.

Area- and culture-specific information was much more strongly advocated in cross-cultural literature and trainer materials than in these findings (Barnes, 1991; Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983; Brislin and Yoshida, 1994b; Grove, 1989; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kohls, 1984; Summerfield, 1993; World Within Reach, 1995).

Re-entry/Readjustment

Readjustment to life after study abroad, sometimes called re-entry, was a recurrent theme in the survey, focus group, and interview findings. On the survey, how to apply the abroad experience after it is over was rated in the top 25 overall. One respondent expressed a wish that the predeparture orientation she attended had addressed adjusting to life after study abroad. Readjustment was one of the most strongly endorsed topics in the focus group discussion. Participants indicated that it is important to understand the re-entry process before leaving to study abroad in order to clear apprehensions with friends and family before departure and plan how to communicate with them. One interviewee seemed determined to talk about the re-entry experience although it was not on the list of components to be discussed in the interview. She called reorientation programming "a privilege and a right" of returning sojourners and challenged institutions to consider their administrative response to the highly personal and sometimes troubled experience of returnees.

These findings are supported by the copious literature which addresses the importance of re-entry issues in programming for sojourners (predeparture or post-return) (Brislin, 1981; Chinn, 1992; Denney, 1986; Grove, 1989; Greenwood, 1991; Kauffman, Martin, Weaver, and Weaver, 1992; Kenney and von Klemperer, 1992; Kohls, 1984; Martin, 1986; Milenko, 1983; Pusch, 1994; Summerfield, 1993).

Self-Awareness

To the theme of self-awareness belong those components of predeparture preparation which relate to the participants' awareness of themselves and their significant relationships, aside from academic, cultural adjustment, and practical issues. Strong endorsement of this theme is found throughout the data.

Defining the sojourn as a personal re-identification process, one interviewee emphasized the need for orientation to provide a forum in which participants can become aware of their own responses to difficult situations. Likewise, the second interviewee contends that participants must identify their own expectations of themselves and of the country prior to departure. She felt strongly that those lacking direction will not fare as well as those who go abroad with some ideas of what they want to accomplish, even though these ideas are likely to change during the sojourn.

For focus group participants, friends and family was one of the topics which emerged as particularly important. This component is significant for predeparture orientation, as the focus group made clear, because many students will not be able to anticipate the impact of the sojourn on their relationships unless they are made aware of it.

The focus group data also show the importance of fostering appropriate attitudes in participants before they depart, such as openness to change, willingness to look ignorant and ask for help, the capacity not to take things personally, and a holistic attitude to see good and bad things that happen on the sojourn as contributing equally to the experience. Mention was also made of the value of learning about and planning for social life abroad, such as identifying in advance university clubs one might like to join.

A cluster of self-awareness and adjustment issues rated high (11th through 14th) on the aggregate list of most important components, right after the pragmatic top ten, indicating that respondents value self-awareness issues in preparing effectively for study abroad.

Perhaps the most telling endorsement for self-awareness components is the large number of respondents to the open-ended survey questions who indicated that the most important part of preparing for study abroad was to be aware of issues related to oneself and one's relationships. In fact, it became clear in the process of coding the responses to this question that the theme of self-awareness was the most universally endorsed.

In general, cross-cultural training literature concurs with these findings; it is advantageous to help sojourners develop a basic awareness of themselves and their significant relationships prior to departure (Barna, 1983; Downs, 1969; Gudykunst and Hammer, 1983; Harris and Moran, 1991; Kealey, 1990; Kohls, 1984; Ladd, 1990; Pusch, 1994; Storti, 1989; Triandis, 1977).

Global Perspective/Social Justice

In the data several factors related to global perspective or social justice appear to be important for predeparture orientation, yet numerous others do not. The focus group, for instance, did not touch on any topics which reflected a

social conscience or social justice perspective. The first interviewee mentioned that the sojourn is about enacting change and being changed, which relates more to a social justice perspective than to, say, a market-driven model of international educational exchange. One interviewee directed her participants to study development education materials prior to departure, but this is understandable given that her program is explicitly focused on development education.

The survey data show high ratings for social issues such as racial and religious tolerance in the host country (in top 10 overall), treatment of the elderly, minorities and children in the host country (23rd), and gender issues in the host country (26th). Three of the top five national items in the host country and two of the top five national items in Canada reflect a concern with social issues. However, most social issues rated quite low, such as literacy and basic education in Canada (in bottom half of the national items) and the host country's participation in international alliances. In open-ended sections, the only response which demonstrated interest in social issues was the comment that the most important thing in preparing to study abroad is to avoid ethnocentrism.

In the philosophies section of the survey, the social cause did not fare well. The statements study abroad should promote global cooperation and understanding and study abroad should promote world peace through personal friendships were ranked third and fifth respectively, demonstrating some interest in the liberal perspective as defined by Warner (1993) and (Toh 1993). However, faring worse were the statements reflecting more of a transformative model (Toh, 1993; Warner, 1993) (study abroad should give students tools to work for social justice and study abroad should help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries), ranking eighth and

tenth respectively. Perhaps a comment which one respondent scribbled on the margin of the survey next to the statement on reducing inequalities will shed some light on this apparent lack of interest in social justice issues. She writes, "But how?"

This limited interest in social justice on the part of respondents is partly in keeping with the cross-cultural training literature, which makes hardly any mention of it (Summerfield, 1993) but is much more interested in facilitating personal (and occasionally institutional) goals. In addition, it is in keeping with the University of Alberta's passing nod to social transformation and global responsibility as outlined in University documents (see Chapter 1 of this thesis; Senate Task Force, 1994). However, past participants indicate a greater interest in social justice issues than is supported by the cross-cultural training literature or the University of Alberta documents. The challenge will be to strike a balance between the laudable interest of students and the limited interest of the institution in equipping students with a more global perspective as part of their study abroad experience.

Preparation Process

Another theme evident in the data is the preparation process itself. Participants in all parts of the study commented on the nature of the way students prepare and the best methods and resources to use as they prepare.

The interview data yield rich insights into the preparation process. One interviewee contended that no one can be completely prepared to go abroad but that it is advisable for people to be as prepared as possible, as those who make individual efforts to be prepared will derive the maximum benefit from the program, while those who make no effort beforehand will probably "coast" through their time abroad. She advocated assigning tasks outside of the

orientation to encourage students to take an active role in their own preparation. The second interviewee also emphasized the need to take into account how different participants access information and tailor the orientation accordingly. She pointed out that orientation programs can be counterproductive if they purport to be the final word in preparation. Such programs can lead participants to believe that they should be able to take their new knowledge and move through the sojourn with more grace and greater success than may be realistic.

The focus group data indicate the importance of accessing more information in predeparture orientation which is specific to the host country or institution. Although the focus group participants talked about the need to have the right attitude before going abroad, one participant felt that it was not possible to prepare for an attitude, but that one finds oneself in a situation and realizes there would have been no way to prepare for it. This opinion is in stark contrast to the perspective held by the interviewees, who held that attitudinal preparation is not only possible, it is an essential part of predeparture preparation.

In the open-ended sections of the survey, a number of respondents indicated that the most important part of preparation for study abroad was the way in which one prepares. They advised good planning, avoiding last minute stress, covering all possibilities, remaining calm, and learning to relax.

In the survey data, other exchange students (preparing, current, and returned) were rated in the top most helpful resources, underscoring the focus group and interview findings that using other exchange participants in the preparation process is invaluable from the perspective of the one preparing. Students seem to far prefer hearing from people who have recently been in their situation than from the "experts" who write travel logs or make videos

about the host country or about travel in general. Interestingly enough, written information about the host country did not rank nearly as high as written material about the host university, which suggests that students in general are more interested in their host university than in the host country. This finding is echoed in the focus group data indicating the importance of more specific information, including amateur videos made by the students themselves, about the host institution.

Experiential Approach

Although not identified in the survey instrument, interview schedule, or focus group questions, an experiential component nonetheless was found in the data. As discussed earlier, the interviewees accorded great importance to the use of experiential activities as a way of accessing cultural and personal adjustment issues with the participants. These orientation providers found that the more participants are aware of what they will face and their own capacity to face it, the better prepared the participants are. Debriefing was described as an essential component in an effective experiential activity. The debriefing allows students to describe their experience and their feelings about it, interpret the situation, identify their (often) incorrect assumptions around it, and prepare to respond differently when they are in the situation again.

Not surprisingly, the experiential components did not appear in the focus group discussion, which followed a recent orientation that had not had an experiential component, nor was it well supported in the quantitative survey data. However, experiential activities were mentioned in some responses to open-ended questions on the survey. A few students indicated it was important to address particularly ephemeral issues in predeparture orientation as follows: preparing for homesickness, preparing to make the

sojourn an incredible experience, having an open mind, avoiding ethnocentrism, and getting ready for culture shock. These topics could potentially be accessed through the use of experiential activities.

Pragmatism

Small inconsistencies in the data, when taken together, indicate that the pragmatic value of an item is positively related to its importance in sojourner preparation. Focus group members wanted information which was more specific to the host university and immediate surroundings: "something more realistic," such as a homemade video of the campus and on-campus housing. They wanted to learn this specific information from other exchange participants, who could give the most realistic perspective. Interviewees were concerned that concrete information related to daily living be expressed early in the orientation program lest dissatisfied participants "sabotage the whole orientation." Interviewees also observed that their participants seem to be more receptive to other people's experiences with cultural adjustment than to theories and charts depicting the adjustment process.

The survey data confirm the importance of pragmatism. Adjustment theories rated incredibly low but other people's experiences with adjustment rated near the top of the aggregate list. Credit transfer, finances, housing, and travel documents emerged as some of the top rated items. All of these can cost time, money, or effort if not properly managed. Yet other "practical" items like climate and telephones were rated low overall, as they are more self-evident issues and therefore less likely to have adverse effects on the respondents (who were by and large traveling to countries employing Western dress about whose climate Canadian schoolchildren learn as a matter of course). The resources respondents found most helpful were other people who could give firsthand information, not videos, and definitely nothing dealing with travel in general. Sex and dating in the host country was an important issue for respondents; it is pragmatic because it has specific implications for their everyday lives abroad, in

contrast to arts and literature, which rated very low related in the host country and in Canada. Climate and civil laws in the host country were among the highest ranking national components; students want to know what they have to do to survive--and not freeze or get arrested. Other national and cultural items with high ratings are likely to come up in everyday living, especially in interactions with host nationals, for example, current topics, geography, and politics in Canada. Strengths and weaknesses rated low relative to other self-awareness concerns because on the surface they do not seem to have as much impact on the sojourn as how to meet new friends in a place one has never been before. Nearly all the responses to open-ended question were pragmatic, from packing a camera to inside information about what professors and courses are the best. The university's and the province's goals and interests were definitely not pragmatic enough to warrant anything but the lowest ratings. Personal goals, not social agendas or institutional needs, ranked as being the most important purpose for study abroad. Is an item important? It is if it is pragmatic.

Institutional or Regional Interests

Institutional and regional (i.e., provincial) interests were among the least important components in the survey, were briefly mentioned in the interviews, and did not even come up in the focus group. The University and Province of Alberta's goals and interests rated among the lowest of the 90 survey items to be included in predeparture orientation; they ranked least and third least important of eleven statements about the purpose of study abroad. In five different open-ended questions, the 57 respondents indicated in essence what they thought was important in preparing to study abroad, and not one of them mentioned institutional or regional interests. Clearly, the goals of the

sponsoring institution and the regional government--as agenda items for predeparture preparation--were the least important components in the study as far as respondents were concerned.

There are several possible explanations for this. Respondents to the survey may not have understood phrases like "the province's goals for human resource development" but thought it sounded uninteresting and, being reluctant to admit they did not know what the items meant, marked down not important rather than don't know. It is also possible that respondents understood exactly what was meant, felt it had nothing to do with them, and concluded that it was not important for anyone else to know in preparing to study abroad. The question then becomes, if students don't think the University's and province's interests are important to know something about before they study abroad, are the institutional and provincial agendas being met? The following section should shed some light on this question.

The University of Alberta's Interests

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the University of Alberta's stated goals and interests with regard to internationalization have implications for predeparture orientation. Although it is not necessary that study abroad participants share these goals and interests for them to be presented in predeparture orientation, it is interesting to note the extent to which respondents share the University's perspectives on what is important in preparing to study abroad.

A basic institutional interest is supported in the findings, namely, that in supporting the competitive goals of the University, students should be prepared for an academically rigorous and personally challenging experience. Respondents concur: they think it is important to be prepared with pragmatic

information which will help them succeed academically (credit transfer was rated number one concern on the survey) and personally (i.e., as related to practical, self-awareness, adjustment, national and cultural issues).

Preparation for ambassadorship, the fourth pillar of the University of Alberta Senate Task Force's (1994) vision for internationalization of the campus, entails adequate academic preparation, familiarity with the host university, understanding of the culture of the host country to reduce the effects of culture shock, enough awareness of one's own culture to serve as an ambassador, and an awareness of the institutional expectation that one be an ambassador (Klineberg, 1981; see Chapter 2 of this thesis). Respondents in this study expressed interest in pragmatic academic information but not in some of the subtleties of academic life abroad which the literature indicates will be advantageous, such as study patterns and teaching methods. Familiarity with the host culture is, for most respondents, of greatest interest when the items have some pragmatic or possibly social value. Cultural values such as individuality (versus valuing the group) rated low in the survey: only one, attitudes toward authority, class, and status, rated in the top 20 of 90 items. National and cultural issues in Canada fared far worse than in the host country; participants were far less interested in learning about their own country than about their destination. Without an understanding of the cultural values which underlie one's own covert behavior and that of host nationals, effective communication abroad easily becomes a stumbling block to effective ambassadorship. Lastly, although ambassadorship was not mentioned per se in the research findings (nor were participants asked to comment on it), it is interesting to note that it also traditionally has not been mentioned in the University of Alberta's predeparture orientations.

In terms of supporting the University's albeit limited interest in development or global justice issues, some interest was shown on the part of past and present participants. They value learning about racial and religious tolerance, human rights, and treatment of minorities, but not about literacy or environmental issues. They thought it was more important to accomplish almost anything else with study abroad than to work for social justice--except, of course, support the university's stated key interests (enhance the University's reputation internationally and compete with graduates worldwide), which they ranked last of all.

Conclusions and Implications

In the light of the findings as articulated in this and the previous chapter, and given the context which was set in chapters one and two, the following conclusions and implications can be drawn.

1. Students want specific, "real," personalized information in preparing to study abroad. They want to meet with past participants, current exchange students, and fellow exchange participants rather than learn from a book; they prefer to learn about the host university rather than the host country; they want to hear other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture rather than listen to theories about adjustment. They want to learn about attitudes toward sex and dating in the host country; in short, they want real-life, first-hand information before they go abroad.

Implication: Predeparture orientation should be specific, "real," and personalized. Where possible, people from or who have been to the host university should interact with students preparing to go abroad. Anecdotal and visual information sources which provide a realistic picture of the abroad

experience should be used as much as possible. More realistic information about daily life at the host university should be gathered and made available to students preparing to go abroad.

2. Study abroad participants perceive "immediate" components such as credit transfer, appropriate dress, finances, and housing to be the most important items to include in predeparture orientation. The items they find most important are items which are most likely to directly impact their day to day lives, as students and as people. This is in keeping with the literature which suggests that immediate concerns must be addressed before trainees can focus on higher level or more peripheral needs. In addition, it is in the institution's best interest to address these needs with preparing students as they may impact the students' ability to successfully fulfill their ambassadorial role, socially or academically. Other day to day items such as using the telephone or local transportation are not as important to participants because they are not immediate concerns for those preparing to go abroad.

Implication: Practical concerns should be addressed in predeparture orientation to address the felt needs of students and to prepare them to have a successful experience abroad. In addition, components which are believed to facilitate student success abroad, such as an understanding of study and teaching methods at the host university, should also be included. Because practical needs may vary across time and institutions, providers should regularly conduct some sort of needs assessment to verify specific needs.

In addition, the University should work to identify and remove programmatic barriers to student success abroad. Such barriers typically exist in the areas of credit transfer and program advising. The institutional and personal benefits of study abroad will be seriously undermined to the extent

that students experience difficulties determining a program of study for their time abroad and arranging for commensurate recognition upon their return. Students will be far less likely to study abroad if they cannot get credit for doing so. The Education Abroad Program is currently working to remove these barriers and as such should be supported in its efforts.

3. Interaction with past participants and visiting exchange students is a very important and helpful component of predeparture preparation, particularly as perceived by study abroad participants. The personal approach was the single most important part of the focus group members' preparation to go abroad; the qualitative and quantitative questionnaire findings indicate a strong interest in personal testimony related to cultural adjustment in particular and as a resource in general.

Implication: This valuable component should be an integral part of predeparture preparation, not only as an agenda item in itself, but as an approach to working toward other goals of the orientation, such as presentation of content and re-entry programming for returnees. Careful consideration should be given to integrate this component with the larger interest of the orientation.

4. Study abroad participants have different perceptions than practitioners and academics about the importance of culture-general and adjustment issues in predeparture orientation. General cultural issues are of little interest to participants but practitioners and academics indicate that they are vital components of sojourner preparation. Adjustment issues are more favorably viewed by respondents but theoretical approaches are to adjustment are at the bottom of respondents' list. The literature indicates that training sojourners about adjustment issues is a necessity. The failure to prepare students to

encounter a culture different from their own is ethically questionable and administratively risky at best.

Implication: General culture and adjustment issues should be addressed in predeparture orientation. Providers of predeparture orientation programs should not be swayed by the disinterest of participants, who may not be fully aware of the potential impact of culture on their abroad experience, but should ensure that participants are equipped with sufficient awareness and skills related to culture to fulfill the mandate of the particular study abroad program (e.g., personal growth, institutional ambassadorship). These issues are significant for predeparture orientation because many students will not be able to anticipate the impact the sojourn may have unless someone makes them aware of it.

As a further consideration, providers should seriously consider the merits of the "learning how to learn" approach to cultural understanding as an alternative to the formal, lecture-style presentation of culture-specific information.

5. Participants want to learn about themselves and their relationships in the context of the study abroad experience before they depart. Academics and practitioners concur that a preparation program should help sojourners develop awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses, reactions to stress, and other competencies and attitudes related to crossing cultures.

Implication: Study abroad participants should have opportunities to become more aware of themselves as individuals and of their relationships in the context of the abroad experience. Orientation activities should be offered which facilitate this kind of focused self-discovery in a safe and ethical manner. At the same time, it should be recognized that participants find most important

those aspects of self-awareness which they deem to be most applicable to their sojourn. Experiential activities should be considered as an effective tool for facilitating self-awareness and other goals.

6. Area-specific issues related to the home and host areas are important for predeparture orientation, although practitioners and academics are far stronger advocates than are study abroad participants. Knowing about host country or regional issues prior to departure is important in that it shows respect for and facilitates good relations with host nationals, heightens awareness of one's own country, and provides a framework for further learning about the host area. Knowledge of one's own country or region is vital in that it allows students to represent well the home country and institution. Participants are interested in "cocktail party" area-specific information, i.e., that which might come up in casual conversation with host nationals, but they also feel it is important to know about some social issues as well.

Implication: Curriculum planners should be aware of participants' predisposition toward readily applicable information and devise strategies for helping students move beyond a functionalist mindset to develop a more thorough understanding of issues related to the host country or region. At the same time, respondents' interest in social justice issues should be accommodated within the context of institutional objectives. Preparatory programming should recognize participants' perceptions but ultimately must address area-specific information, related both to the host area and to the home country, in the context of institutional interests and in particular ambassadorial functions expected of participants while abroad.

7. Re-entry issues form a crucial component in study abroad programming. Copious literature supports addressing the readjustment process with sojourners before and after their time abroad. Participants want to know about

the challenges of returning so they can prepare themselves and their loved ones even before they depart. This study shows that readjustment is as important to discuss in predeparture orientation as is cultural adjustment.

Implication: Providers of study abroad programs should address re-entry in predeparture programming, including cultural readjustment and the students' role as campus ambassadors of an international perspective and of the study abroad program. Programmers should determine their role in facilitating the return of study abroad participants and consider the feasibility of offering post-return reorientation programming.

8. Internationalization is important to the University of Alberta, but the philosophy of and policies around internationalization have been insufficiently articulated across the campus and to external stakeholders thus far. Measures are currently being taken to communicate the University's vision for internationalization; however, the particular focus and implications for policy have not yet been clarified.

Moreover, the interests of the University of Alberta are only partly in agreement with the perspectives of its study abroad participants. In particular, the University's goals to be recognized as a world-class institution are best served by study abroad participants who are well equipped ambassadors, ready for an academically and personally challenging experience, with at least a passing awareness of global issues.

Implication: The University of Alberta should carefully consider its philosophical position related to internationalization, recognizing that different philosophical approaches will lead to dramatically different outcomes for the institution and its constituents. This issue is particularly important now

as critical awareness of the University's international vision is building on campus and a course of action has not yet been clearly articulated.

In addition, program providers at the University must seriously consider how programs can more closely represent the interests of the providing institution. Specifically, an increased focus on ambassadorship and the components which undergird it must be introduced, as well as an awareness of basic global issues.

Orienting students to institutional and regional interests was disavowed by providers and study abroad participants alike. Program planners should consider the integrity of their programming in light of larger institutional and program interests, particularly in times of economic restraint and an increased emphasis on quality assessment. If participants are not accomplishing what the program intends to accomplish, what is the price to them as individuals and to the viability of the program?

9. An experiential approach to preparatory programming was shown to be important to program providers but was not acknowledged by participants, who may be unfamiliar with the approach and so would not necessarily be able to accurately assess its importance to them. However, the literature indicates that a number of components identified by participants as important have been successfully addressed using an experiential approach. These components include culture-general issues, area- and culture-specific information, adjustment, and self-awareness.

Implication: An experiential approach should be included in predeparture orientation to accomplish some of the more personal goals of training, particularly in rendering cultural, adjustment, and self-awareness components more accessible to pragmatically minded participants.

10. A global perspective is lacking in predeparture programming literature and is marginally important to University of Alberta participants. University of Alberta policy documents mention a transformative model of internationalization and past participants indicate a moderate interest in social justice issues such as religious and racial tolerance in the host country. However, overall, survey participants do not believe this perspective is an important goal of study abroad.

Implication: A global perspective should be introduced into predeparture orientation insofar as it addresses an institutional interest and appeals to students. In addition, the ethics of sending students abroad with little or no awareness of larger global issues such as environmental care and social/structural justice are questionable. Conscience must not be absent from the curriculum planning process.

11. The Education Abroad Program should consider restructuring its predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants to ensure quality. Only a well-designed, carefully planned program will ensure that students are equipped to fulfill the ambassadorial role and to represent the interest of the study abroad program and the University.

Implication: The Education Abroad Program at the University of Alberta should establish a mechanism to address the recommendations of this report and develop a strategy for implementation. In particular, a standardized curriculum for predeparture programming. should be developed and routinely evaluated In addition, orientations should be facilitated by personnel with knowledge and experience in the areas of group facilitation, cross-cultural training, and adult education. When such persons are not available, assistance should be sought from qualified members of the campus or local community.

12. A great deal of information, awareness, and skills is important in a variety of areas in preparing for study abroad. Traditional face-to-face instruction in a one or two day orientation will be insufficient to address all of the relevant issues.

Implication: Providers should consider alternate delivery methods such as: self-directed study; country-specific sessions; multimedia programs; computer assisted instruction; sessions with past participants and visiting exchange students; and independent study such as reports and personal journals. Orientation sessions should form only a part of the curriculum for student preparation.

Recommendations for Practice

It is clear from this study that effective predeparture orientation is a necessary part of optimal study abroad programming. At the same time, optimal programming can only be defined in the context of institutional priorities. The ethos on campus with regard to internationalization must be reflected in student mobility programs or they will be counterproductive and ultimately marginalized. For a coordinated effort to be possible, there must be a clear vision for the nature of internationalization on campus.

Picture if you will a first year student at the University of Alberta. She heard about the university's student exchanges in her high school and enrolled at the university intending to go on an exchange. She takes language courses in her first two years because she wants to be prepared for her experience abroad. In her other classes, she gains a global perspective from her internationally aware professors and she mingles with foreign students and scholars and returned exchange students on a daily basis. Before her exchange, she participates in a credit course designed especially for students preparing to go

abroad. During the course, she learns how to access the pragmatic information she really wants, grasps what it means to be an ambassador for the university, and also comes to value the cultural and personal preparation the course encourages. While abroad, the student actively advocates international exchange and the University of Alberta's world class standing in teaching, research, and service. When she returns from her exchange, the student joins other returnees in a reorientation program which includes personal debriefing, evaluation of the exchange program, and a key role in predeparture orientation for outgoing exchange students. On campus and in her community, the returnee is an advocate for international exchange and a more global perspective.

The vision articulated above is not currently the reality at the University of Alberta nor at any other Canadian university. This integrated approach to student mobility and predeparture orientation requires significant coordination across the campus and cannot be achieved overnight. If we take this vision as an ideal, realizing that we have not yet arrived, how do we reconcile this ideal with the current situation, and how can this study help us come closer to realizing this vision?

Obviously not every study abroad program will be able to develop an optimal predeparture orientation program instantly, but the best place to start is in assessing the nature and strength of the institution's commitment to internationalization. How committed is the institution to creating an international ethos on campus? Is the university expecting students to be facilitators of larger institutional exchanges or is it enough for them to have an enjoyable experience on a purely personal level? The larger goals of the institution will determine the focus of predeparture programming.

In this light, study abroad professionals have a role in advocating greater internationalization across the campus. Where possible, study abroad should be positioned as a part--and a key part-- of a wider thrust to internationalize the curriculum, the student and faculty, and the goals and interests of the institution.

Another consideration is blending the pragmatic information students want to learn with the ambassadorial or process-oriented learning advocated by academics, practitioners, and perhaps indirectly by the institution. Such learning may pertain to culture and cultural adjustment, the host country and host culture, global perspective, and self-awareness. If students want to learn "real," authentic, specific information from their peers, as this study suggests they do, then programs which do not accommodate this will never be effective from the students' perspective. At the same time, programs which fail to prepare participants for the rigors of cultural adjustment and intercultural communication will be negligent in their duties and will limit students' abilities to make the most of their experiences.

One way to work within this tension between students needs, expert opinions, and institutional perspective is to consider using experiential and learning how to learn approaches to orientation. These approaches can give students maximum freedom to learn what they want to learn, at the same time helping them buy into the need to learn what others think they should learn and providing them with tools to keep on learning during their time abroad. This learning how to learn approach is consistent with the University of Alberta's articulated goals (Fraser, 1995).

The final set of considerations involve logistics. Who is best qualified to lead orientations, given who is available? What is the optimal length of an orientation, from the perspective of the person preparing the material and the

students' schedules? What schedule will best serve the needs of your students: a weekend retreat, a series of evening sessions, or a ten week course? What funding is available for staffing and materials? What alternate methods of delivery can be used to encourage independent investigation and maximize learning potential? What materials would really create the link for participants between what they know and what they want--and need--to know? All of these issues will play a part in curriculum development.

The future of higher education is undeniably international. Study abroad plays a vital role in the continued internationalization of higher education. Effective predeparture orientation for study abroad participants is one way to ensure that study abroad is an integral, contributing part of the internationalization process. With all of the benefits of effective predeparture orientations programs, can we afford to settle for second best?

Recommendations for Further Research

A study such as this often raises as many questions as it answers. Recommendations for further research in this area are indicated below.

1. This study is one of the first to consider needs of study abroad participants in Canada. A replication of this study would serve to confirm the findings and increase the generalizability of the findings and conclusions.

2. Resources for study abroad preparation were discussed briefly in this study but bear closer examination. In particular, research is needed into what resources participants currently access in preparing to study abroad and what resources they might conceivably access if they were available. This question will be of increasing importance as the nature of information accessing changes through the use of telecommunications technology. An

understanding of students' needs and interests related to resources for study abroad preparation will inform program planners and expand the possibilities for alternate delivery of predeparture training.

3. This study considered paradigms of international educational exchange but more research is needed into the philosophical orientations supported by participants, program planners, and providing institutions, particularly with reference to the orientation needs of proponents of differing philosophical perspectives. Discrepancies between participants' and providers' philosophies about the nature of the study abroad experience might indicate a need to rethink program design, marketing, selection, and predeparture orientation.

4. Further research is needed into the needs of study abroad participants in Canada, particularly in the context of developmental and generational studies of Canadian students. As the bulk of the literature in education abroad is written for American students, it would be useful to understand more fully the distinctions between study abroad participants in Canada and the U. S. in order to assess the applicability of U.S. American materials for Canadian audiences and to further the development of education abroad literature which is appropriate for audiences in Canada.

Summary

This study considered the importance of predeparture orientation components for study abroad as perceived by the sponsoring institution, providers of other orientation programs, and preparing and returned study abroad participants. Overall, this study was successful in that it provided valuable insight into the needs and interest of study abroad participants in the context of larger institutional interests. In addition, the study is one of the first

to address the specific needs and interests of Canadian study abroad participants. The information gathered in this study will provide study abroad practitioners, particularly in Canada, with qualitative and quantitative data on which to base program decisions.

Study abroad is a powerful tool for self-discovery, personal growth, international ambassadorship, and the realization of institutional and regional interests, but only with optimal student preparation. Effective predeparture orientation programming can accomplish these goals and more.

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Appendices

A Responses to Internet Request for Predeparture Materials

B Questionnaire

C Focus Group Questions

D Focus Group Introductory Handouts

E Focus Group Consent and Confidentiality Form

F Interview Questions

G Interview Consent From

H Cover Letter for Questionnaire

I Questionnaire Code Book and Instructions

J Questionnaire Data for Question 21

K Questionnaire Data for Questions 11 Through 16

Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad
University of Alberta
Researcher: Michelle Szabo

Summary of Predeparture Orientation Materials Provided by Other Institutions

20 April 1995

Materials were provided by:

University of Victoria
University of Wisconsin
University of Pittsburgh
Lehigh University
Queen's University
Trent University
The University of Texas at Arlington
Texas A&M University
California State University, Sacramento
Wesleyan University
Auburn University
The Pennsylvania State University
Binghamton University
James Madison University
The University of Tulsa
University of Rochester

Note: not every institution provided all of the information or materials used in their orientation programs. This summary is descriptive but not conclusive.

Components of Predeparture Orientation

Academic/Home Institution Concerns
Almost every institution mentioned academic concerns in its orientation materials. Academic and other home institution concerns include:

- financial aid/fees/scholarships/assistantships
- student status and registration
- course approval/credit transfer/transcripts/grade transfer
- academic advising/faculty relations
- housing upon return
- coops/directed studies/independent study
- role of International Office
- career advising

Nuts and Bolts
Every institution included logistical concerns in its orientation materials, such as:

- insurance
- money/credit cards/ATMs/exchange
- communication/change of address/phones and phone cards
- discounts/International Student Identity Cards
- passports/visas/official documents
- drivers' licenses
- flights/travel agencies/travel arrangements
- work abroad
- measurement conversions
- packing/what to take/voltage
- jet lag/jet wear
- power of attorney
- backpacking tips
- disabled students' concerns

Cultural Adjustment/Culture Shock
Many programs deal specifically with culture shock or cultural adjustment. Variations on this theme include:

- personal adjustment
- being happy with yourself and carrying that overseas
- tips on adjusting abroad
- how to succeed while abroad
- coping strategies
- cross cultural awareness
- participation in new culture
- stages of adjustment
- body language

- keeping an open mind
- re-entry/reverse culture shock/returning home
- stereotypes of Americans

Past Participants/Exchange Students
Many orientation programs make use of past participants as well as exchange students from the host countries. One program also uses expatriates from the host country or other "experts". Involvement includes:
- meeting in small group by program/country
- discussing do's and don'ts for study abroad
- presenting nuts and bolts information
- providing reports and photos

One person writes, "Past participants are an excellent source of information.[...] I think these are usually the best sessions and new participants feel like this is the most helpful."

Host Institution/Country Information
Several programs provide information about the host institution or the host country. Information may include:
- academic practices/teaching methods/how things are done
- granting credit/registration
- housing
- orientation/support services/student services/recreational activities
- details of individual placement
- culture of country and region/knowledge of host country
- sources of information/things to find out about host country
- gifts

Health Issues
Several programs deal specifically with health concerns abroad. Topics include:
accessing emergency medical care
immunization/vaccines
health insurance
special conditions/allergies
what to take/medical supplies
prescriptions/extra medication, glasses, etc.

Fellow Exchange Participants
A few institutions specifically mention the importance of helping people going on the same exchange meet one another during the orientation process. Many other programs include small group time which groups the students

together with those going on the same exchange or to the same region. One orientation program provides a blank address sheet for the participants to fill in as they meet people at the orientation. Another lists this as a main goal for the orientation session.

Safety
A few universities specifically address safety issues in their orientation.

Parents
A few universities offer special sessions and/or materials for family and friends. One office provides the parents with the same materials it gives to the students.

Embassies
A few programs include information about the role of American/Canadian embassies abroad and list their addresses.

Ambassadors
For a few institutions, it is important is discuss the rights and responsibilities of participants as ambassadors of their school and of their country.

Approaches to Predeparture Orientation

Structure
Each program offers a different structure, including:
- mandatory courses lasting a semester
- mandatory two day sessions
- two mandatory evening sessions with an optional lunch hour presentation
- one optional evening session
- no orientation requirement for students attending branch campuses.

Activities
Activities include:
- large group presentations and discussion
- small group discussions by program or region
- Bafá Bafá with debriefing
- Barnga with debriefing

- videos ("Going International," "Cold Water," Canadian Orientation Video)
- ropes course

Materials

Materials distributed or used in orientation sessions include:

- orientation booklets
- checklists for financial aid, health, academic concerns, packing, self preparation
- tips from past participants
- list of important addresses and contacts
- personal information forms for International Office use
- calendar of events and deadlines
- information about specific program
- letter/packet for parents
- power of attorney form
- course approval form
- registration forms
- articles on backpacking, body language
- health brochure
- international calling brochure
- list of embassies
- independent study course proposal
- measurement conversions
- International Student Identity Card information and application
- State Department travel warning on drugs abroad
- fax to transmit to International Office upon arrival

Speak Your Mind

This survey is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre at the University of Alberta in order to determine what is important in preparing to study abroad. The survey is designed to let you share your experiences about what you think is important for students preparing to study abroad. Your responses are confidential.

Please complete the survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by Friday July 14, 1995.

All questionnaires returned by Friday July 14, 1995 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

All questions relate to your experiences on a University of Alberta study abroad program. If you studied abroad more than once, please respond based on your first University of Alberta exchange. The rating scale is different for each question, so read the directions carefully. You may want to flip through old photographs or journals from your study abroad experience as a reminder - but then - don't forget to answer the questions!

Please return to:
PDOP Survey
International Centre
172 HUB International
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2E2 • 403-492-2692

University of Alberta
Student Services

Speak your Mind

I. Complete all questions with a check mark or write in the answer.

1. Are you female ❑ or male ❑?
2. In which country did you study abroad? _____
3. Were you 17 - 24 years old ❑ or 25 + years ❑ when you began your U of A study abroad program?
4. How long did you study abroad? _____ months
5. In what Faculty were you registered when you studied abroad?

   _____
6. Were you an undergraduate ❑ or a graduate ❑ when you studied abroad?
7. What was one of the most helpful things you learned or did in preparing to study abroad?

   _____

   _____

   _____
8. What is one thing you wish that you had learned or done in preparing to study abroad?

   _____

   _____

   _____
9. Did you participate in an orientation session before you left to study abroad? yes ❑ no ❑

   a. If yes, what do you remember as being the most helpful part of the orientation for you?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b. If yes, what else do you wish had been included in the orientation?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Speak your Mind

11. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad? Place a check mark in the box according to the scale below.

11. Practical Arrangements

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. health concerns	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. financial matters	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. telephone systems	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. local transportation	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. what to pack (clothes, personal belongings)	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. work abroad opportunities	❑	❑	❑	❑
g. housing	❑	❑	❑	❑
h. insurance	❑	❑	❑	❑
i. travel documents (passport and visas)	❑	❑	❑	❑
j. extracurricular travel while abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

12. Academic Life Abroad

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. home university administrative procedures	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. host university administrative procedures	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. selecting courses	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. study patterns and teaching methods	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. guidance concerning academic program while abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

Speak Your Mind

11. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad?

13. Self-Awareness

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. personal strengths and weaknesses	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. personal concerns about going abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. communication with friends and family while abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. interaction with new people abroad	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. personal reactions to positive and negative stress	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

14. Adjustment and Readjustment

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. what it is like to adjust to a new culture	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. how to cope with adjusting to a new culture	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. theories about adjusting to a new culture	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. adjustment to life after study abroad (returning home)	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. how to apply the abroad experience after it is over (on campus, in the community)	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

Speak Your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad. Place a check mark in the appropriate box.

15. National, Institutional or Regional Issues

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. climate				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. geography				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. political structures				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
g. literacy and basic education				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
h. arts and literature				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
i. environmental issues				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
j. history of international conflict				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
k. participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
l. gender issues				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
m. treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
n. religious and racial tolerance				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
o. human rights issues				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
p. current topics of national or regional interest				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
q. University of Alberta's teaching and research goals				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
r. University of Alberta's goals to become more international				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
s. the province's foreign trade initiatives				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
t. the province's goals for human resource development				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

Remember!
All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

16. Cultural Issues

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
a. stereotypes				
about Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. nonverbal communication (gestures, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. religion(s)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. food				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

	don't know	not important	somewhat important	very important
e. customs, rituals and superstitions				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. how to dress appropriately for culture and climate				
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
g. attitudes toward authority, class and status				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
h. attitudes toward work and study				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
i. attitudes toward personal relationships (family vs. acquaintances, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
j. value of the individual vs. the group (personal independence, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
k. business practices (negotiation, decision-making styles, etc.)				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
l. attitudes toward sex and dating				
in Canada	❑	❑	❑	❑
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
m. physical safety				
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
n. personal hygiene issues (showering, etc.)				
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑
o. outlets for personal interests (hobbies and sports, etc.)				
in host country	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

in Canada:

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

in host country:

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

Speak your Mind

IV. How helpful are the following resources in preparing to study overseas? Please circle the number of your response according to the scale below.

17. Helpfulness of Resources

	don't know	not helpful	somewhat helpful	very helpful
a. other students going to the same university or country	❑	❑	❑	❑
b. written materials about the host country or region	❑	❑	❑	❑
c. written materials about travel in general	❑	❑	❑	❑
d. written materials about the host university	❑	❑	❑	❑
e. predeparture orientation meetings	❑	❑	❑	❑
f. cultural simulation activities	❑	❑	❑	❑
g. people from the host university	❑	❑	❑	❑
h. people who have visited the host country or region	❑	❑	❑	❑
i. people who have studied abroad at the host university	❑	❑	❑	❑
j. videos about the host country or region	❑	❑	❑	❑
k. videos about the host university	❑	❑	❑	❑
l. videos about travel in general	❑	❑	❑	❑
m. language tapes	❑	❑	❑	❑
n. language instructors	❑	❑	❑	❑

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ❑ 2nd most important ❑ 3rd most important ❑

All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

Speak your Mind

V. Rank the statements in order of importance.

18. Write "1" in the space beside the most important statement, "2" in the box beside the second most important, etc.

Study abroad should:

- enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace. ☐
- enhance the University's reputation abroad.
- prepare students to cope with economic, social and political realities of an international society. ☐
- enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world. ☐
- promote world peace through personal friendships. ☐
- promote global cooperation and understanding. ☐
- give students tools to work for social justice. ☐
- help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries. ☐
- allow students to pursue their professional goals. ☐
- allow students to pursue their academic goals. ☐
- allow students to pursue their personal goals. ☐

VI. Summary

19. What else would you include in preparing to study abroad?

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____

20. What do you think is the most important part of preparing to study abroad?

_____
_____
_____

21. Feel free to write any comments you have about the survey itself.

_____
_____
_____

Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

Focus Group Questions

Components of Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad
for the
University of Alberta

1. Are you ready to go? Tomorrow?
   What do you still have to do before you will be ready to go?
   What are three key things that you feel you should know before you study abroad?

2. Thinking about the recent predeparture orientation program in which you participated, how beneficial was that program for you? What else should have been covered?

3. Before students go abroad to study, what do they need to know?
   What do they need to be able to do?
   What kind of attitudes should they have?

4. What is important in predeparture orientation programs for study abroad participants?

University of Alberta
Edmonton

International Centre

Canada T6G 2E2

172 HUB International, Telephone (403) 492-2692
Facsimile (403) 492-1134

You wouldn't write an exam without studying first, right?

You wouldn't go overseas to study without preparing, either. Predeparture training is pretty important. But how important is it? What should students know before they go overseas? What does it mean to be really ready to go? What's important in predeparture training?

You can help answer those questions. Right now there's a project which is looking at what's important in predeparture training. The project is looking to three major sources for information:

- study abroad participants such as yourself
- the institutions which offer the programs, and
- other professionals in the field.

The project is not an evaluation of a particular program. It's a broader look at how all three groups view predeparture training for study abroad.

So how can you help? You can volunteer to share your ideas and opinions in an interview later this month. Your involvement in the project is totally voluntary and won't affect your standing with the University, the International Centre, or the study abroad program. Your participation will be confidential and your anonymity will be respected. You will not be identified in any parts of the project report. To ensure confidentiality, all data will be kept in a secure place and will be available only to the researchers. The results of the project will be made available to the International Centre.

The design of this study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Alberta Department of Educational Policy Studies Ethics Review Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please feel free to contact any of the following:

Michelle Szabo	Dept. of Educational Policy Studies	435-0277
Dr. Paula Brook	Dept. of Educational Policy Studies	492-7949
Barry Tonge	International Centre	492-5960

Sign Me Up!

The interviews take place at the International Centre on one of the following dates, depending on volunteer availability. **Volunteering does not commit you to the project.** If you are interested in volunteering and sharing your ideas, please rank your preference of the possible interview times below in order (1st, 2nd, and 3rd).

Friday, March 24	6:00 to 7:30 p.m.	_____
Saturday, March 25	9:30 to 11:00 a.m.	_____
Monday, March 26 27	6:00 to 7:30 p.m.	_____

In each case, a light meal would be provided.

The interviews will take place in a group format of not more than twelve students. If more people volunteer than are needed, a random selection process will be used to identify those who will participate. All of you who volunteer will be contacted by phone to confirm arrangements.

* *

Please check off:

_____ I can't make it for an interview.

_____ I 'd like to volunteer to be part of the group interview.

If you agree to volunteer for the interview, please complete the section below:

Name _____

Foreign institution at which you intend to study _____

Phone number (days) _____ (evenings) _____

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Student Agreement to Participate in Focus Group Interview

Components of Predeparture Orientation for Study Abroad
for the
University of Alberta

The study of predeparture orientation components for study abroad for the University of Alberta and the focus group arrangements have been explained to me. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I have read the description, understand it, and voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I also understand that I have the right to opt out of this study at any time.

I hereby affirm that I will not communicate or in any manner disclose publicly information discussed during the course of this interview. I agree not to talk about material related to this study or interview with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and the researcher.

_____

Signature of Participant

Interview Schedule

[As the interviewer and subject are personally acquainted, the first 15 minutes are designated for general conversation not related to the topic. Before initiating the interview, the interviewer will go over the attached consent form.]

Introduction

When I phoned, I mentioned that I was interested in hearing from you what you personally think is important in a predeparture orientation program for people preparing to go abroad. [not a question]

Essential questions

- Thinking about the predeparture programs you've been a part of or have heard about, what would you say were the most important components of those programs?

  Probe

- Thinking about people you know who've gone abroad, what do you think people should know before they go overseas?

  Probe

- Thinking about your own experiences going abroad, what kind of skills or abilities do you think people should have before they go abroad?

  Probe

- What kinds of attitudes do you think people should have before they go abroad?

  Probe

- Is there anything else you'd like to say about what you think is important in a predeparture program for people going overseas?

Probing questions to be used as needed

- Tell me more about _____.
- Can you describe for me what _____ would look like?
- When you say that _____ is an important component/attitude/skill, what kinds of things would you include in that?
- What do you mean by _____?
- Can you talk more about _____?

Interview Consent Form

Nature of the study
This interview is part of a study being conducted by a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The goal of the study is to determine how best to prepare study abroad participants for their experience overseas. The study will look at the perceptions of student participants, program providers and other experts such as yourself. To verify the authenticity of the research/researcher, contact Dr. Paula Brook in Educational Policy Studies at the University.

Your participation
It is essential to the study that we hear from experts such as yourself what they perceive to be the most important components of predeparture orientation. Your input is important and your participation is appreciated. In fact, the researcher would be happy to share with you the executive summary and recommendations of the study once they are available. Just include you e-mail or office address below. Your participation in voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview
During the interview, you will be asked a few questions about *your perception* of what is important in a predeparture orientation program. You will not be asked to describe specific programs already in existence. The focus will be on *your opinions*. The interview will be tape recorded and will last about 30 minutes.

Confidentiality
The contents of this interview will be strictly confidential. Your name will not appear on the transcript, in the study, or in any subsequent publications related to the study. Similarly, your agency/institutional affiliation will not be mentioned in conjunction with any information you might provide during the interview.

I hereby declare that I have read the above and agree to participate in the study as outlined above. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature: _____. Date: _____.

e-mail or office address: _____.

University of Alberta
Edmonton

International Centre

Canada T6G 2E2

172 HUB International, Telephone (403) 492-2692
Facsimile (403) 492-1134

Monday, 26 June 1995

Dear Friend,

Greetings from the University of Alberta! As you know, the International Centre is constantly working to improve its programs and services for students. Our latest project is to rethink how we prepare students for study abroad. Who better to ask than the students themselves? After all, you're the experts – you've taken part in a University of Alberta study abroad program. You know what it's like to plan your trip, figure out how to get credit for the work you did, and convince your family and friends that you 're not going to be gone forever (though it probably felt like forever sometimes). You know what helped you make the most of your study abroad experience, what you were glad you knew beforehand and what you wish you had known before you left. We would like to give you an opportunity to share what you have learned and to have an impact on the study abroad program for years to come.

The enclosed questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre in order to redesign the predeparture orientation program for study abroad. We will be sharing the results with other institutions as well. Your responses will be anonymous and completely confidential.

As an added incentive, we will be holding a draw and giving away a gift certificate for a DINNER FOR TWO AT ANY EARL'S RESTAURANT. To enter the draw, just complete the questionnaire and return it to the International Centre by Friday, July 14. The winner will be notified by mail. We appreciate you returning the completed questionnaire as quickly as possible. We have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope to make it easier for you. If for some reason you do not receive this questionnaire until after July 14, please fill it out and return it as quickly as you can. We value your input.

It takes only 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire, so go ahead and fill it out right now. If you have any questions about the study or the questionnaire, or if you would like to see the results of the study once it is complete, feel free to contact us. We welcome your comments.

Many thanks,

Barry Tonge
Coordinator
Education Abroad Program

Dr. Paula Brook
Associate Professor
Adult and Higher Education

Michelle Szabo
Graduate Researcher

PDOP Survey Coding Directions

The results from the green questionnaires need to be entered into a special database (see disc under PDOP Questionnaire Data). The first 25 have already been done. Every question that can be coded numerically has been assigned a number from V1 to V150 (see ~~green~~ codebook). Each possible response is represented by a number. For example, V1 asks the person's gender, so there are four possible answers:

male = 1
female = 2
no response = 9 -9
both male and female = 8 -9

The codebook explains what code to give for each possible response.

If there is no answer to a question, give it a 9. The exceptions are questions where 9 is a possible answer, as in "how many months did you study abroad?" In those cases, V4 and V140-V150, give no response a negative 9 (-9).

If a person marks down several answers and they're not supposed to, mark as follows:

1 + 2 gets a ~~8~~
1 + 3 gets a 6
1 + 4 gets a 7 -9
2 + 3 gets an 8
2 + 4 gets a 10
3 + 4 gets an 11

If ~~anyone~~ marks more than two, make a note of it and I'll figure something ~~out~~.

For the countries people studied in and the faculties they were registered in, see the list in the codebook. If anyone comes up with one that's not listed, add it to the list and give it a number (not 9).

Survey information is confidential and should be put away when not in use.

Thanks!

Code book

Speak your Mind

This survey is part of a study being conducted by the International Centre at the University of Alberta in order to determine what is important in preparing to study abroad. The survey is designed to let you share your experiences about what you think is important for students preparing to study abroad. Your responses are confidential.

Please complete the survey and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by Friday July 14, 1995.

All questionnaires returned by Friday July 14, 1995 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

All questions relate to your experiences on a University of Alberta study abroad program. If you studied abroad more than once, please respond based on your first University of Alberta exchange. The rating scale is different for each question, so read the directions carefully. You may want to flip through old photographs or journals from your study abroad experience as a reminder - but then - don't forget to answer the questions!

Missing value : -9
Multiple responses: -9

University of Alberta
Student Services

Please return to:
PDOP Survey
International Centre
172 HUB International
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2E2 • 403-492-2692

Speak your Mind

1. **Complete all questions with a check mark or write in the answer.**

v1 1. **Are you female ☐[1] or male ☐[2]?**

v2 2. **In which country did you study abroad?** _____

v3 3. **Were you 17 - 24 years old ☐[1] or 25 + years ☐[2] when you began your U of A study abroad program?**

v4 4. **How long did you study abroad?** _____ **months** indicate #

v5 5. **In what Faculty were you registered when you studied abroad?**

_____

v6 6. **Were you an undergraduate ☐[1] or a graduate ☐[2] when you studied abroad?**

7. **What was one of the most helpful things you learned or did in preparing to study abroad?**

no column for this

8. **What is one thing you wish that you had learned or done in preparing to study abroad?**

no column for this

v7 9. **Did you participate in an orientation session before you left to study abroad? yes ☐ no ☐**

a. **If yes, what do you remember as being the most helpful part of the orientation for you?**

no column for this

b. **If yes, what else do you wish had been included in the orientation?**

no column for this

Countries
1. England
2. Scotland
3. Wales
4. U.K.
5. Australia
6. U.S.A.
7. Mexico
8. Sweden
10. Austria
11. Korea
12. Japan

faculties
1. Arts
2. Science
3. Business
4. Education
5. PE. + Rec.
6. Law
7. Ag/For/Home Ec.

Speak your Mind

11. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad? Place a check mark in the box according to the scale below.

11. Practical Arrangements	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V8 a. health concerns	☐	☐	☐	☐
V9 b. financial matters	☐	☐	☐	☐
V10 c. telephone systems	☐	☐	☐	☐
V11 d. local transportation	☐	☐	☐	☐
V12 e. what to pack (clothes, personal belongings)	☐	☐	☐	☐
V13 f. work abroad opportunities	☐	☐	☐	☐
V14 g. housing	☐	☐	☐	☐
V15 h. insurance	☐	☐	☐	☐
V16 i. travel documents (passport and visas)	☐	☐	☐	☐
V17 j. extracurricular travel while abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V18 2nd most important ☐ V19 3rd most important ☐ V20

1 = a
2 = b
3 = c
4 = d
5 = e
6 = f
7 = g
8 = h
10 = i
11 = j

12. Academic Life Abroad	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V21 a. <u>home</u> university administrative procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐
V22 b. <u>host</u> university administrative procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐
V23 c. selecting courses	☐	☐	☐	☐
V24 d. getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
V25 e. study patterns and teaching methods	☐	☐	☐	☐
V26 f. guidance concerning academic program while abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V27 2nd most important ☐ V28 3rd most important ☐ V29

Speak Your Mind

11. Based on your experience, how important is it to address each of the following topics before students study abroad?

13. Self-Awareness

		1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
V30	a. personal strengths and weaknesses	☐	☐	☐	☐
V31	b. personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
V32	c. personal concerns about going abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
V33	d. communication with friends and family while abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
V34	e. interaction with new people abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐
V35	f. personal reactions to positive and negative stress	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V36 2nd most important ☐ V37 3rd most important ☐ V38

1 = a
2 = b
3 = c
4 = d
5 = e
6 = f

14. Adjustment and Readjustment

		don't know 1	not important 2	somewhat important 3	very important 4
V39	a. what it is like to adjust to a new culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
V40	b. how to cope with adjusting to a new culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
V41	c. theories about adjusting to a new culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
V42	d. other people's experiences with adjusting to a new culture	☐	☐	☐	☐
V43	e. adjustment to life after study abroad (returning home)	☐	☐	☐	☐
V44	f. how to apply the abroad experience after it is over (on campus, in the community)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V45 2nd most important ☐ V46 3rd most important ☐ V47

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad. Place a check mark in the appropriate box.

15. National, Institutional or Regional Issues	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
a. climate				
V48 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V49 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. geography				
V50 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V51 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)				
V52 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V53 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. political structures				
V54 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V55 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)				
V56 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V57 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)				
V58 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V59 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. literacy and basic education				
V60 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V61 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. arts and literature				
V62 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V63 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. environmental issues				
V64 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V65 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. history of international conflict				
V66 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V67 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)				
V68 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V69 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. gender issues				
V70 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V71 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities				
V72 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V73 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐

Speak Your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

1a
2b
3c
4d
5e
6f
7g
8h
9i
10j
11k
12l
13m
14n
15o
16p
17q
18r
19s
20t
21u

	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
n. religious and racial tolerance				
V74 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V75 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. human rights issues				
V76 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V77 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. current topics of national or regional interest				
V78 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V79 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
q. University of Alberta's teaching and research goals				
V80 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V81 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
r. University of Alberta's goals to become more international				
V82 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V83 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
s. the province's foreign trade initiatives				
V84 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V85 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
t. the province's goals for human resource development				
V86 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V87 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V88 2nd most important ☐ V89 3rd most important ☐ V90

Remember!
All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

16. Cultural Issues	1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
a. stereotypes				
V91 about Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V92 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. nonverbal communication (gestures, etc.)				
V93 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V94 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. religion(s)				
V95 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V96 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. food				
V97 in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V98 in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐

Speak your Mind

III. The next section asks how important it is to know something about each topic about Canada and/or the host country (country where the student will study abroad) before students study abroad.

		1 don't know	2 not important	3 somewhat important	4 very important
	e. customs, rituals and superstitions				
V99	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V100	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	f. how to dress appropriately for culture and climate				
V101	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	g. attitudes toward authority, class and status				
V102	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V103	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	h. attitudes toward work and study				
V104	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V105	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	i. attitudes toward personal relationships (family vs. acquaintances, etc.)				
V106	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V107	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	j. value of the individual vs. the group (personal independence, etc.)				
V108	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V109	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	k. business practices (negotiation, decision-making styles, etc.)				
V110	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V111	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	l. attitudes toward sex and dating				
V112	in Canada	☐	☐	☐	☐
V113	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	m. physical safety				
V114	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	n. personal hygiene issues (showering, etc.)				
V115	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐
	o. outlets for personal interests (hobbies and sports, etc.)				
V116	in host country	☐	☐	☐	☐

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

in Canada:

most important ☐ V117 2nd most important ☐ V118 3rd most important ☐ V119

in host country:

most important ☐ V120 2nd most important ☐ V121 3rd most important ☐ V122

Speak your Mind

IV. How helpful are the following resources in preparing to study overseas? Please circle the number of your response according to the scale below.

	17. Helpfulness of Resources	1 don't know	2 not helpful	3 somewhat helpful	4 very helpful
V123	a. other students going to the same university or country	☐	☐	☐	☐
V124	b. written materials about the host country or region	☐	☐	☐	☐
V125	c. written materials about travel in general	☐	☐	☐	☐
V126	d. written materials about the host university	☐	☐	☐	☐
V127	e. predeparture orientation meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐
V128	f. cultural simulation activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
V129	g. people from the host university	☐	☐	☐	☐
V130	h. people who have visited the host country or region	☐	☐	☐	☐
V131	i. people who have studied abroad at the host university	☐	☐	☐	☐
V132	j. videos about the host country or region	☐	☐	☐	☐
V133	k. videos about the host university	☐	☐	☐	☐
V134	l. videos about travel in general	☐	☐	☐	☐
V135	m. language tapes	☐	☐	☐	☐
V136	n. language instructors	☐	☐	☐	☐

1 c
2 b
3 c
4 d
5 e
6 f
7 g
8 h
9 i
10 i
11 j
12 k
13 l
14 m
15 n

Rank the three most important topics in the above section in order of importance by placing a letter corresponding to the statement in the box below.

most important ☐ V137 2nd most important ☐ V138 3rd most important ☐ V139

All questionnaires returned by Friday, July 14 will be entered in a draw to win a dinner for two at the Earl's Restaurant of your choice!

Speak your Mind

V. Rank the statements in order of importance.

Indicate actual number.

18. Write "1" in the space beside the most important statement, "2" in the box beside the second most important, etc.

Study abroad should:

v140	enhance students' ability to compete in the global marketplace.	☐
v141	enhance the University's reputation abroad.	☐
v142	prepare students to cope with economic, social and political realities of an international society.	☐
v143	enhance students' ability to compete with university graduates from around the world.	☐
v144	promote world peace through personal friendships.	☐
v145	promote global cooperation and understanding.	☐
v146	give students tools to work for social justice.	☐
v147	help students take action in reducing inequalities between richer and poorer countries.	☐
v148	allow students to pursue their professional goals.	☐
v149	allow students to pursue their academic goals.	☐
v150	allow students to pursue their personal goals.	☐

VI. Summary

19. What else would you include in preparing to study abroad?

1. no column for this
2.
3.

20. What do you think is the most important part of preparing to study abroad?

no column for this

21. Feel free to write any comments you have about the survey itself.

no column for this

Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

QUESTIONNAIRE DATA FOR QUESTION 21
(verbatim, in no particular order)

- Glad to see that you're trying to improve, it really needs it.
- I got it after the draw date!
- I'm glad you're trying to make an excellent exchange program.
- This is the second questionnaire I've done and the experience in no longer fresh in my mind. it may be better to survey recent students returning from study abroad.
- Section V - I only ranked those I felt were relevant to my experience - those I left blank I felt were not important to me.
- I hope this helps future students studying abroad.
- Very thorough!
- Don't make orientations to detailed or cumbersome.
- Good!
- Question 18 should have included: general personal enrichment through travel and living in a foreign country.
- Great--covered every aspect of studying abroad I could think of-- hope you get some useful responses!
- Ranking items is difficult when you have many items--TOO LONG! This exchange has been the best experience of my life thus far!
- I assumed parts III and IV are based on my past experience.
- Brings back good memories. I hope I was helpful.
- I think it's great that you're doing this. I would like to make a recommendation if I could. The best part of my exchange was figuring most of this out on my own. I do think people should prepare themselves to a degree, but the excitement lies in the realization of many of these issues while you're actually there. I think you should proceed with this as you are and keep the underlying message in line with the attempt to tell people that they don't need to study "everything" before they go. Ignorance can be embarrassing, but it also has its personal awards [sic] too. The self-realization is overwhelming and I think this needs to be preserved. If one tries too hard or over-study before he/she leaves, I think it dulls the experience. Thanx.
- A great idea although it is difficult to rate some of the categories.

- Both host and home universities need to organize the program better in order to help students more efficiently, especially when they first arrive. Hopefully this survey can help achieve this.
- I found that the way in which the survey was structured restricted my responses such that I'm not sure they truly reflect my opinion. Open-ended questions as this one would have been more appropriate.
- Needs a space for general comments! I have so much to say...
- There should be more room to write problems encounters during the exchange, so that these problems can be grouped and looked into.
- Thorough except it would be helpful to be able to qualify some of the answers. E.g., Question 17j--videos helpful only if they are careful to avoid stereotypes, and even if they are, it is impossible to fit the experience of a country on a tape.
- Should have been sent as soon as we got back.
- Good idea!!
- Well thought out. Good points to think about. I think it would be great if the exchangees received letters from the International Centre while abroad in the host country. Just one or two letters during the year to let them know what's going on at the U of A so that they don't feel so isolated. News of Canada or Alberta is seldom, if ever, available. I heard that this was done in the past, the letters, and I think it's a wonderful idea. Along the lines of the letter or support ideas, another suggestion is for future exchangees to meet with the ones from the previous year during the summer, before leaving (if possible). If not, then at the orientation. The past exchangees could give practical advice from a Canadian student/"been there" perspective. U of A exchangees could, if they chose, be on an int. mailing list to be circulated among the exchangees, or have a "buddy system" where tow exchangees in different countries swap addresses through the International Centre, to drop postcards to each other once in a while. There's nothing worse when abroad than an empty mailbox. Thanks.
- The ranking questions were difficult because there were too many options. If the survey is confidential or anonymous, how do you draw for the Earl's certificate: Just curious. I think I figured it out: by the wee # in a corner. Never mind! I am fortunate that U of A puts a lot of effort into the Study Abroad program. Some university exchange students that I spoke to had

little or no prior orientation. Thank you for taking your role as seriously as you do.

- Nice to have someone to reminisce with--someone who <u>really</u> understands.
- Questions 15 and 16 have too many subpoints and are too complex to process.
- The survey made me think and I thought that was not allowed in the summer.
- Some questions seemed irrelevant in relation to studying in Australia, however in a third world country or <u>some</u> Eastern European or Asian countries these concerns are of utmost importance.

Table 6
Reported Importance of Practical Components by Weighted Rating (Question 11)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%		
1	Financial matters	10	18	47	83	1	9.200
2	Housing	11	19	46	81	3	9.050
3	Travel documents	7	12	48	84	2	9.000
4	Health concerns	25	45	28	50	9	7.250
5	Insurance	28	51	25	46	4	7.150
6	What to pack	28	49	27	47	5	7.150
7	Extracurricular travel abroad	30	54	22	39	6	6.600
8	Work abroad opportunities	32	58	11	20	8	4.900
9	Telephone systems	40	73	5	9	10	4.550
10	Local transportation	32	57	8	14	7	4.250

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank

Table 7
Reported Importance of Academic Components by Weighted Rating (Question 12)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%		
1	Getting home university credit for courses taken abroad	8	14	49	86	1	9.300
2	Host university administrative procedures	11	20	43	77	3	8.700
3	Home university administrative procedures	17	30	40	70	2	8.500
4	Selecting courses	25	44	27	47	5	6.900
5	Guidance concerning academic program while abroad	26	47	19	35	4	5.850
6	Study patterns and teaching methods	30	54	13	23	6	5.000

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank

Table 8
Reported Importance of Self-Awareness Components by Weighted Rating (Question 13)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important N	Somewhat Important %	Very Important N	Very Important %	Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
1	Personal expectations and objectives for study abroad	16	29	38	68	1	8.220
2	Personal concerns about going abroad	15	27	37	67	4	8.095
3	Interaction with new people while abroad	24	42	31	54	2	7.545
4	Personal reactions to positive and negative stress	21	38	31	55	3	7.415
5	Personal strengths and weaknesses	31	60	15	29	5	5.860
6	Communication with friends and family while abroad	42	75	10	18	6	5.540

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank

Table 9
Reported Importance of Adjustment Components by Weighted Rating (Question 14)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important N	Somewhat Important %	Very Important N	Very Important %	Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
1	How to cope with adjusting[c]	18	32	37	66	1	8.200
2	Other peoples' experiences adjusting[c]	19	33	37	65	2	8.150
3	What it is like to adjust[c]	22	39	33	59	5	7.850
4	How to apply experience after it's over	24	42	31	54	4	7.500
5	Adjustment to life after study abroad	18	32	32	57	3	7.300
6	Theories about adjusting[c]	35	64	4	7	6	3.900

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank
[c]to a new culture

Table 10
Reported Importance of National, Institutional, and Regional Issues in Canada by Weighted Rating (Question 15)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%	
1	Current topics of national or regional interest	20	36	32	57	7.495
2	Geography	30	53	25	44	7.020
3	Political structures	30	53	23	40	6.670
4	Religious and racial tolerance	29	51	23	40	6.585
5	Human rights issues	31	55	21	38	6.520
6	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)	32	56	21	37	6.485
7	History of international conflict	29	51	22	39	6.405
8	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities	34	61	17	30	6.075
9	Environmental issues	27	51	18	33	5.815
10	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)	30	54	17	30	5.720
11	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)	34	61	15	27	5.715
12	Gender issues	36	63	14	25	5.620
13	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)	34	53	17	30	5.610
14	Literacy and basic education	35	64	11	20	5.176
15	Arts and literature	31	56	12	22	5.000
16	Climate	28	49	14	25	4.915
17	University of Alberta's goals to become more international	28	52	9	17	4.265
18	University of Alberta's teaching and research goals	27	52	5	10	3.555
19	The province's foreign trade initiatives	25	47	3	6	2.930
20	The province's goals for human resource development	19	37	3	6	2.455

[a]By weighted rating

Table 11
Reported Importance of National, Institutional, and Regional Issues in Host Country by Weighted Rating (Question 15)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%		
1	Religious and racial tolerance	16	28	40	70	3	8.425
2	Climate	19	33	38	67	2	8.335
3	Civil laws (drivers' licenses, drinking age, etc.)	20	35	35	61	1	7.895
4	Treatment of the elderly, children, and minorities	24	43	30	54	12	7.505
5	Gender issues	23	40	31	54	9	7.460
6	Standard of living (poverty, unemployment, etc.)	26	46	28	49	6	7.190
7	Current topics of national or regional interest	25	45	27	48	4	7.050
8	Human rights issues	25	45	27	48	7	7.050
9	Geography	36	63	20	35	8	6.670
10	History of international conflict	35	64	19	35	11	6.630
11	Economy (strength of currency, growth indicators, etc.)	33	58	19	33	10	6.225
12	Political structures	33	59	17	30	5	5.985
13	Environmental issues	27	49	18	33	14	5.725
14	Literacy and basic education	35	61	15	26	13	5.700
15	Participation in international alliances (NAFTA, etc.)	34	60	13	23	16	5.260
16	Arts and literature	35	63	7	13	15	4.375

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank

The *ranking* of items in this section of the questionnaire was somewhat distorted in that the *ranking* questions did not ask respondents to differentiate between items with respect to Canada and with respect to the host country. In general, the overall ranking was more similar to the ratings for the host country, region, or institution than to the ratings for Canada, which suggests that respondents may have assumed the ranking question was only in regard to the host country. For this reason, Table 11 omits all mention of ranking and is sorted by weighted rating.

Table 12
Reported Importance of Cultural Issues in Canada by Weighted Rating (Question 16)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important		Very Important		Rank[b]	Weighted Rating
		N	%	N	%		
1	Stereotypes	28	50	25	45	2	6.960
2	Attitudes toward work and study	31	55	19	34	3	6.160
3	Attitudes toward sex and dating	32	56	19	33	7	6.140
4	Attitudes toward personal relationships	35	63	15	27	5	5.805
5	Nonverbal communication	30	54	17	30	8	5.720
6	Customs, rituals and superstitions	38	69	12	22	1	5.635
7	Attitudes toward authority, class and status	32	57	15	27	4	5.535
8	Value of the individual vs. the group	30	55	14	26	6	5.275
9	Business practices	30	55	12	22	9	4.905
10	Religion(s)	36	63	6	11	10	4.210
11	Food	34	60	7	12	11	4.210

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank

Table 13
Reported Importance of Cultural Issues in Host Country by Weighted Rating (Question 16)

Rating[a]	Variable	Somewhat Important N	Somewhat Important %	Very Important N	Very Important %	Rank[b]	Weighted Ratig
1	How to dress appropriately for culture and climate	6	11	50	88	1	9.295
2	Physical safety	11	19	44	77	2	8.685
3	Attitudes toward authority, class and status	18	32	36	64	8	8.035
4	Nonverbal communication	20	36	34	61	4	7.855
5	Attitudes toward work and study	18	32	35	63	5	7.855
6	Attitudes toward sex and dating	23	40	33	58	10	7.810
7	Customs, rituals and superstitions	23	40	32	56	3	7.630
8	Attitudes toward personal relationships	21	38	31	55	12	7.415
9	Stereotypes	26	46	28	49	7	7.190
10	Value of the individual vs. the group	19	35	30	55	11	7.175
11	Personal hygiene issues	24	42	28	49	14	7.015
12	Outlets for personal interests (hobbies, sports, etc.)	27	47	26	46	6	6.930
13	Food	29	51	23	40	9	6.585
14	Religion(s)	30	53	20	35	15	6.140
15	Business practices	25	44	18	32	13	5.351

[a]By weighted rating
[b]By weighted rank